

THE CHILEAN COMMUNIST PARTY

1922-1947

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Founded in 1922 by Socialists who already exerted considerable influence in the Chilean trade union movement, the Chilean Communist Party was a communist party in name only during its early years. It was not until the later 1920s that it began to acquire the organisational forms and practices characteristic of all members of the Third Communist International and not until the early 1930s that it was led by men who gave unquestioning allegiance to Moscow. Reduced to a shadow of its former self by prolonged persecution in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the party's fortunes did not begin to revive until after 1935, when the Third International adopted policies which encouraged it to become a regular participant in Chilean coalition politics. Between 1935 and 1947, the party's fortunes fluctuated somewhat in accordance with changing national and international circumstances but coalition politics enabled it to play important roles in the election of three successive Presidents of the Republic, to extend its appeal to wider sectors of society, to expand its electoral and trade union support and, indirectly, to lay the basis for an increasingly effective and professional party machine. In 1946, the party became the first Latin American Communist Party to hold designated portfolios in cabinet but its experience of high government office was cut short by Cold War pressures - pressures which eventually forced the party into a period of clandestinity which lasted from 1947 until 1958.

This, then, is the broad chronological sweep of this study. Within its context, particular attention is paid to the party's relations with the International Communist Movement, to its links with organised labour, to its organisational development, to its electoral support and to its changing relations with other Chilean parties.

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P R E F A C E

Perhaps, in recent years, the Chilean Communist Party has become best known for the role it played in the election and government of the ill-fated President Salvador Allende (1970-1973). Yet, in fact, the Chilean Communist Party had been a force of some significance in Chilean politics for many years and, until the Cuban Revolution, could lay claim to being the most successful Communist Party in Latin America. No other Latin American Communist Party achieved such close links with organised labour, no other party had similar electoral appeal and no other party had the degree of acceptance and respectability which the Chilean party enjoyed. Despite this, the Chilean Communist Party has not been the subject of much systematic study by either foreign or Chilean scholars and this work is an attempt to remedy that neglect for the years 1922-1947. During those years, the PCCh developed its more striking characteristics both as an organisation and as an actor in the Chilean political process and it was during those years that it moved from the margins into the mainstream of Chilean political life.

This study is based primarily on the newspaper and pamphlet literature of the time, not only of the party itself but of all groups which had some part in the development of events. Use has also been made of archival material

from the Foreign Office in London and from the Dirección General del Trabajo in Santiago. The Chilean Communist Party was in the process of collecting material for the Museo Recabarren when this author was in Santiago but that collection only yielded a few items which were not available in public and private libraries elsewhere.

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PRINCIPAL ABBREVIATIONS

ADCh	Alianza Democrático de Chile
BSA	Buró Sud-Americano
CC	Comité Central
CR	Comité Regional
CL	Comité Local
CNSL	Confederación Nacional de Sindicatos Legales
Comintern	Communist International
CTCh	Confederación de Trabajadores de Chile
DTIQ	El Despertar de los Trabajadores, Iquique
FN	Falange Nacional
FOCh	Federación Obrera de Chile
FOR	Foreign Office Records
IC	Izquierda Comunista
JVP	La Jornada Comunista, Valdivia
PC	Partido Conservador
PCCh	Partido Comunista de Chile
PD	Partido Demócrata
PL	Partido Liberal
POS	Partido Obrera Socialista
PR	Partido Radical
PS	Partido Socialista de Chile
SSA	Secretariado Sud-Americano

**Chapter 1 The Origins and Foundation of
the Chilean Communist Party**

The roots of the Partido Comunista de Chile(PCCh) and of the modern Chilean working class movement lie in the economic, social and political changes which that country experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Like its neighbours, Chile had emerged from its struggle for independence from Spain impoverished and plagued by civil war. After 1830, however, Chile enjoyed a prolonged period of relatively peaceful and orderly development - a striking contrast to the bloody turbulence which continued to afflict most other Latin American Republics. Chile owed much of its good fortune in this matter to those geographic, economic and social peculiarities which gave the country a greater degree of cohesion than was usual on the continent. Thus, despite Chile's rugged and difficult terrain, the vast majority of its inhabitants lived in one distinctive area - the 700 mile long Central Valley which lies between the Andes Mountains and the coastal ranges. This concentration of population, together with the country's narrowness (never more than one hundred miles wide) and its lengthy coastline meant that central government, based in the capital city of Santiago, had good land and sea communications with other population centres which made the task of governing a relatively easy matter.(1)

(1) See Harold Blakemore and Clifford T. Smith, Latin America: Geographical Perspectives (London, 1971) pp475-565, for a more detailed geographical appreciation of Chile.

Similarly, the vast majority of Chileans were engaged upon one economic activity, agriculture, and experienced one form of social organisation, the fundo or great estate. The dominance of agriculture based on the fundo provided cohesion in two directions. Firstly, the fundo owner or hacendado had a paternalistic and almost feudal attitude towards his work force and their close relationship tended to forge strong bonds of loyalty between classes. Secondly, the hacendados, who constituted Chile's ruling elite, tended to share the economic preoccupations and the social attitudes of their rivals for political power.(2) Finally, Chile was relatively homogeneous in racial terms. Negroes had never been imported in large numbers and the Indians, by the early nineteenth century, had been submerged by miscegenation, driven out of the Central Valley or exterminated.(3) Thus, two racial groups dominated, the mestizo and the white and since the latter constituted a numerous minority, not all of whom were wealthy, the sharp coincidence between social type and economic class which so embittered political conflict elsewhere in Latin America did not prevail to the same extent in Chile.

These factors, however, did not make Chile entirely immune from the sort of conflicts which all Latin American countries experienced in the decades after Independence. Chile had its caudillos, it experienced the pulls of a

(2) G.M. McBride's Chile: Land and Society (New York, 1936) provides the classic study of the importance of the latifundia to Chile's development.

(3) Francisco Encina and Leopoldo Castedo Resumen de la Historia de Chile (3 vols., Santiago, 1961) i. p361.

regionalism reluctant to accept rule from Santiago and suffered from civil wars as Federalist and Centralist, Liberal and Conservative battled for power.(4) Nonetheless, its underlying cohesion meant that the gulfs which separated rival groups in Chile were rather less deep and less bitter than in most Latin American countries.

The period of sustained and more or less peaceful development which Chile experienced after 1830 was not altogether the product of fortuitous and impersonal circumstance. Chile owed much to human ingenuity and, in particular, to the skill and foresight of the men who framed the 1833 Constitution and created the system which channeled Chile's political development for almost a century. In 1830, at the Battle of Lircay, the more conservative and centralist forces in Chilean politics, the pelucones, defeated their more liberal and democratic opponents, the pipiolos, and brought to an end a seven year period of intermittent civil war known as La Anarquía. One faction of the pelucones, led by Diego Portales, managed to impose its criterion on the 1833 Constitution. Portales and his friends perceived that lasting peace and stability could only be restored to Chile by re-establishing harmony between the three principal pillars of Chilean society - the landed aristocracy, the Church and the Army - and by recreating the firm, authoritarian government which Chile had experienced as a colony. (4)

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- (4) See Simon Collier Ideas and Politics of Chilean Independence 1808-1833 (Cambridge, 1967) for a detailed account of struggles during the Independence period.
- (5) Julio Heise González, Historia Constitucional de Chile (Santiago, 1950) pp47-50.

They restored the privileges and properties which previous 'democratic' regimes had confiscated from the landed aristocrats and the Church and curbed the Army through reorganisation and the creation of a civilian militia. In the 1833 Constitution, they instituted a quasi-monarchical form of government suitably adapted to the then current republican and constitutional norms. Thus, while the principle of the separation of powers was recognised, almost total power was invested in the office of the President of the Republic while a primarily consultative role was envisaged for the bi-cameral legislature. By severely limiting the franchise and by instituting indirect elections for the Presidency, Portales and his friends ensured that control remained firmly in the hands of the landed aristocracy. However, despite the deliberate attempt to limit popular participation in the political process, the 1833 Constitution was not unenlightened. Education, for example, was made the responsibility of the state and, more important still, steps were taken to ensure that the Presidency did not degenerate from an institutional to a personal dictatorship. Presidents were not permitted to serve more than two consecutive terms and Congress, which the Presidents could not dissolve, was given limited powers over finance and the Armed Forces. In sum, the 1833 Constitution had the merits of recognising and bestowing legitimacy upon existing power relationships in Chilean society and of providing an acceptable framework within which rival groups could compete for political power in a relatively peaceful manner.

Under the aegis of the 1833 Constitution, Chile experienced the peace and stability necessary for sustained economic growth. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, mining and agricultural resources were developed; banking and commerce began to flourish. With economic growth came social change; new elites emerged whose wealth was not based primarily on land but on banking and commerce; new middle sectors - professional men, functionaries and businessmen - appeared in response to the demands of an increasingly complex economy and, at the lower end of the social scale, a new urban artisan class began to form. However, mid-century economic and social change was not on a sufficiently large scale to generate new forces willing and able to challenge the traditional ruling class for power. Indeed, the landed aristocracy showed considerable flexibility in absorbing the new mining and commercial elites and political divisions, far from being re-drawn on the basis of class or socio-economic policy, continued to revolve around constitutional and religious issues.

Two issues in particular dominated nineteenth century politics in Chile - presidential authoritarianism and the powers and privileges of the Church. These issues, together with the intense personal rivalries between those who wished to become President of the Republic, lay behind the emergence of a series of loosely-knit political parties in the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1840s, some pelucones, thwarted in their efforts to secure the presidency for one of their number, joined with the remnants of the pipiolos

to form the Partido Liberal(PL) which pressed for curbs on presidential powers and greater public liberties. Later, an administration hostile to the Church caused the pelucones to split again, producing two parties; the Partido Conservador(PC), which defended the Church's position, and the Partido Nacional(PN), which took the government's side. Finally, in the 1860s, the left wing of the PL, more militant in its anti-clericalism and its defence of public liberties than the main body of Liberals, broke away to form the Partido Radical(PR).(6)

If mid-century economic and social change played a minor role in the emergence of these parties, over the years they did become associated with particular sectors of the ruling class. The PL, for example, drew its support from the less devout hacendados and the newer elites; the PC became the voice of the traditionalist Catholic landowners while the PN represented secular-minded landowners, state functionaries and progressive businessmen. The PR was, perhaps, the clearest manifestation of mid-century economic and social change since it drew its leadership and inspiration from the new mining elites.

The issue of presidential authoritarianism was not only a catalyst in the formation of political parties but a significant factor in Chile's constitutional development.

(6) Standard works on the development of Chilean political parties include Alberto Edwards and Eduardo Frei, Historia de los partidos políticos chilenos (Santiago, 1949); René Leon Echaiz, Evolución de los partidos políticos chilenos (Santiago, 2nd ed., 1971). See also Germán Urzúa Valenzuela, Los partidos políticos chilenos (Santiago, 1968).

Conflict between the executive and legislative arms of government, each intent on expanding or defending its prerogatives, characterised Chile's constitutional history in the nineteenth century - much in the same way, according to one famous Chilean writer, that King and Parliament wrestled for power in seventeenth century England.(7) Indeed, the balance of power between President and Congress is often used to distinguish periods in Chile's development. Thus, the Autocratic Republic, generally dated from 1833 to 1861, saw presidential power little troubled by congressional interference while during the Liberal Republic which followed, constitutional reforms were passed which converted Congress into a strong and independent body. So strong that, by the 1880s, Congress could make governing an arduous task for any president who incurred its hostility. In the late 1880s, President Balmaceda found himself in precisely that position although, ironically enough, as a congressman he had been in the forefront of the battle to curb presidential power. In the face of congressional obstructionism, Balmaceda tried to rule without Congress altogether, an action which precipitated the 1891 Revolution - and his own downfall.(8)

The 1891 Revolution is usually taken to mark the beginning of the final stage of Chile's development under

(7) See Alberto Edwards La Fronda Aristocrática (Santiago, 1936).

(8) For contrasting views on the contentious subject of the origins of the 1891 Revolution, see Harold Blakemore British Nitrates and Chilean Politics 1886-1896 (London, 1974) and Hernán Ramírez Necochea Balmaceda y la Contrarevolución de 1891 (Santiago, 3rd edn., 1972).

the 1833 Constitution - the so-called Parliamentary Republic. As its name might suggest, the Parliamentary Republic saw the ascendancy of the legislature over the executive arm of government. Emboldened by its victory in the 1891 Revolution, Congress began to use the powers it had won under the Liberal Republic with an increasing frequency and, according to some critics, with a decreasing sense of responsibility. Ministerial instability, caused by the use of the congressional faculty to censure and remove ministers from office, and the interference of Congress in the most minute details of public administration, in a manner inimical to efficiency and dispatch, became striking features of the Parliamentary Republic. Increasingly, Presidents found themselves in need of a working majority in Congress to perform the most routine tasks of government. Presidents still possessed the means to influence Congress - through control over state patronage and the ability to influence election results - but the loose structure of the political parties and their susceptibility to fierce internal conflicts and fragmentation made the task of constructing a stable congressional majority one which often eluded the most astute of presidents. Inevitably, the Parliamentary Republic came to be associated with weak, uncertain and corrupt governments incapable of meeting the challenge of economic and social change.(9) While this reputation may well have been undeserved, it led

(9) See Ricardo Donoso Alessandri, agitador y demoledor (2 vols. Mexico City, 1952) I, pp178-191 for a useful survey of contemporary critical opinion of the Parliamentary Republic.

broad sectors of Chileans to believe that something had to be done to purge and reform the political system in the early twentieth century.(10)

The major cause of the rapid social and economic change which Chile experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be found in Chile's victory in the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). By defeating Peru and Bolivia, Chile acquired the rich nitrate deposits of Tarapacá and Antofagasta. Nitrates swiftly became Chile's most important export industry and the key factor in a general economic expansion which brought profound social changes. The nitrate industry stimulated the development of ancillary industries and services to satisfy its own needs and contributed to an expansion of the internal market by paying wages to large numbers of workers. The industry had an even greater impact on the economy through the role it came to play in government finances. Taxes levied on the exports of nitrates rapidly became the most important single source of revenue for the state and between 1880 and 1920, governments obtained an average of 43% of their total annual income from this source.(11) Moreover, since the industry rapidly fell under the control of foreign investors, the bulk of Chile's share of its most important export industry

(10) See Julio Heise González Historia de Chile: El Periodo Parlamentario, 1861-1925 (Santiago, 1974) Part 5, for an interesting defence of the record of the Parliamentary Republic.

(11) Hernán Ramírez Necochea op cit, p14.

was received in the form of these taxes. Thus, the integration of the nitrate industry into the economy initiated a complex process. Government spending and not private investment became the principal motor of economic growth and the government's capacity to spend was directly tied to the prosperity of the nitrate industry which, in its turn, was subject to the vagaries of world demand. In sum, the whole economy became hostage to the fortunes of this single industry.(12) The social consequence of the economic growth promoted directly, or indirectly, by the nitrate industry was great. Middle sectors of Chilean society - professional men, commercial and government functionaries, businessmen, small industrialists and manufacturers - expanded to meet the demands of the economy. Perhaps more striking still, the processes of internal migration were stimulated and an urban proletariat was created. Farm workers, deprived of their traditional occupation by a decline in agriculture and attracted by the prospect of higher wages and better opportunities, flocked to the major cities and the new productive zones in the north and the south of the country. By 1907, 43% of all Chileans lived in towns as compared with 27% in 1875.(13) During almost the same period, the population of the nitrate provinces more than trebled and the coalmining and manufacturing zone around Concepción in the south experienced

(12) See Aníbal Pinto, ed. Chile, Hoy (Santiago, 1970) pp9-16, for a brief but clear discussion of the impact of the nitrate industry on the economy.

(13) Julio César Jobet Ensayo Crítico del desarrollo económico social de Chile (Santiago, 1955) pp132-133.

a similar increase.(14) By 1910, some 50,000 workers were employed in the nitrate fields, 10,000 in the coal mines, 17,000 on the railways and 71,000 in manufacturing industries.(15)

With the concentration of large numbers of workers in working and living conditions which were often harsh and very different from those to which the worker had been accustomed in the countryside, a strong sense of class identity and consciousness began to develop. For the first time the worker was exposed to the regimentation of industrial life and dependent on wages for his daily survival; any illusion which the migrant may have brought from the fundo concerning a community of interest between employer and employee was swiftly eroded. Indeed, as an increasing number of workers were becoming dependent on wages, Chile itself was affected by a slow but persistent inflation. The value of the peso fell by two-thirds between 1880 and 1910 while, according to another source, the real cost of consumer articles increased fourfold between 1891 and 1908.(16) It was, perhaps, this inflationary pressure as much as the different working and living conditions which the migrant worker experienced which helped to develop class consciousness - and which led to the creation of organisations specifically designed to defend the interests of the working

(14) Enrique Reyes El Desarrollo de la Conciencia Proletaria (Santiago, 1973), pp34-36.

(15) Jorge Barría Serón Los movimientos sociales de principios del siglo XX (Memoria, Universidad de Chile, 1953) pp10-13.

(16) Ibid. p18: Julio Cesar Jobet op cit p.134.

classes.

Perhaps nowhere is the process of the formation of working class consciousness better seen than in the nitrate provinces of Antofagasta and Tarapacá. There, large numbers of workers, often recruited by unscrupulous means, were herded together in poorly constructed camps in the hostile isolation of the Atacama desert. Lacking in the most rudimentary amenities, the camps were the private kingdoms of the nitrate companies. The company store provided the worker with the necessities of life at its own prices and convenience while the company police controlled access to and departure from the camp and maintained order and discipline - sometimes in a brutal and arbitrary fashion. The truck system, poor water, the absence of civil rights, the lack of schools and impartial justice, the open toleration of prostitution, gambling and illegal distilling of liquor, the lack of proper medical attention - these were the perennial complaints of the nitrate workers.(17) Moreover, living cheek by jowl with the nitrate workers was a scattering of administrative personnel whose lifestyles, pastimes and often language were very different. Small wonder that the nitrate workers developed a particularly strong sense of class identity and solidarity which was regularly transmitted to other parts of Chile when, by necessity or choice, they returned to the central and southern provinces.

(17) See Enrique Reyes, op cit, pp129-211 for copies of the nitrate workers' complaints and the responses of government and the employers.

The nitrate fields were by no means the only places where conditions helped to foster a strong sense of class identity. Conditions in the southern coalfields mirrored those found in the nitrate provinces while the experiences of the migrant worker in the towns tended towards the formation of similar attitudes, if in a less intensive form.

While the development of a clear sense of class consciousness had profound significance for the development of the working class movement in Chile, the first form of worker organisation which that country experienced belonged to an earlier stage of its development. Mid-century economic and social change and the creation of an urban artisan class produced the first mutualist society in 1853. The mutualist society, which remained the most usual form of worker organisation until well into the twentieth century, provided social security and educational benefits for its members. Generally, it was organised on a trade basis, was not political in a partisan sense and was not concerned with fighting employers for better pay and conditions. Under the impact of late nineteenth century change the mutualist movement grew considerably and in 1902 created a national organisation, the Congreso Social Obrero, which claimed 20,000 members in that year.(18) Associated with the mutualist societies were the philharmonic and instruction societies which were particularly concerned with music and education.

(18) Jorge Barría Serón op cit, p67.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, sharpening class conflict and the penetration of anarchist ideas produced a new form of worker organisation - the resistance society - specifically designed to fight for better pay and conditions for its members by direct and militant action. First founded by railway shop workers in Santiago in 1898, the resistance society spread to other groups of workers elsewhere in the country - including miners in Lota, port-workers in the northern provinces and bakers and seamen in Valparaíso.(19) Shortly after the first resistance society was founded, another form of worker organisation appeared - the mancomunal. The mancomunal, which first appeared in Iquique in 1900, combined the essential features of both the mutualist and the resistance society and was the true precursor of the modern Chilean trade union. Associated with socialist rather than anarchist influence, mancomunales were created in Tocopilla, Taltal, Copiapó, Lota, Coronel and Lebu in the years following 1900. However, while the resistance society and the mancomunal were influential amongst certain sectors of workers, they do not appear to have had a long life. A government survey of all forms of worker organisation in 1910 reported that of a total of 433 organisations claiming 59,136 members, only 7 were resistance societies while the mancomunal seems to have disappeared

(19) For general accounts of the working class organisations in Chile in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Julio César Jobet Recabarren: Los orígenes del movimiento obrero y del socialismo chileno (Santiago, 1955); Alejandro Chelén Rojas Trayectoria del Socialismo (Buenos Aires, 1967) and Marcelo Segall Desarrollo del Capitalismo en Chile (Santiago, 1953).

altogether.(20) The vast majority of worker organisations then, were mutualist, philharmonic and instruction societies.

One of the major reasons for the relatively short life of the resistance society and the mancomunal was their involvement in strike actions. The increasing frequency of strikes in the first decade of the twentieth century was not viewed by the authorities with equanimity and they resorted to judicial process and physical repression in an effort to crush the more militant type of worker organisation and the strikes with which they were associated.

Although most strikes were settled peacefully and quickly by direct negotiation between employer and employee without government intervention, others dragged on for long periods and some ended in bloodshed. Police and Army killed tens and sometimes hundreds of workers in strikes in Valparaíso (1903), Santiago (1905) and Antofagasta (1906).(21) While the strikers themselves sometimes occasioned riots and civil disturbances which, to some extent, excused the vigorous responses of the authorities no such justification can be found for the treatment meted out to strikers in Iquique in 1907 where government repression reached its climax for that decade. There, Army machine-gunners opened fire on a dense but peaceful crowd of striking nitrate workers and their families gathered in and around the Escuela Santa María;

(20) Jorge Barría Serón op. cit. p67.

(21) See Julio César Jobet's Recabarren pp114-117, for a brief account of these strikes.

some 2,000 people died.(22) The repression of the Iquique strike dealt a physical and moral blow to the Chilean working class movement; recovery took several years.

The established political parties were not unaffected by the social developments produced by late nineteenth century economic change. In 1901, the PC formally incorporated the social christian principles laid down in the papal encyclical Rerum Novarum into its ideology; the PL and the Partido Liberal Democrático(PLD), formed by balmacedistas after the 1891 Revolution, eventually accepted the idea that the state should intervene in the settlement of labour disputes while, in 1906, the PR proposed that the state should play an even larger role in the regulation of class relationships.(23) While these parties showed varying degrees of paternalistic concern for the condition of the new working classes, none of them tried to capture their political support by adopting programmes specifically designed to meet their needs. In political terms the working classes were seen as a problem to be solved rather than a force to be harnessed.

The first political party to make a concerted attempt to represent and appeal to the working classes as such was the Partido Demócrata(PD), founded by a group of dissident Radicals in 1887. Aiming at nothing less than the political, social and economic emancipation of the people

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- (22) First official reports of the massacre claim only 140 dead and wounded (La Patria, Iquique, 24.12.1907) but the figure of 2,000 dead is not generally disputed now.
- (23) See Peter G. Snow, Radicalismo Chileno, (Buenos Aires, 1972) pp57-59.

the PD adopted electoral means to fight for the implementation of a rather incoherent reform programme which, even if enacted in its entirety, would have fallen short of the stated objective.(24) Several different factions soon emerged within the PD which, almost from the first, was affected by serious internal divisions caused by political and personal differences. Perhaps the issue which caused most conflict in the early years of the PD was the question of whether to participate in the coalition politics of the day and, if so, which of the two great coalitions should be supported - the Alianza Liberal, based on the PL, or the Coalición, based on the PC.(25) These questions, and the approach of presidential elections, opened a breach in the PD in 1901 between the reglamentarios, who argued against participation in either coalition, and the doctrinarios, who urged support for the Alianza Liberal.(26) Even at this stage, the conflict between reglamentarios and doctrinarios was complicated by the existence of a third socialist or social democratic current. The socialist Democrats, who had begun to appear in the 1890s, differed from the other currents in the greater emphasis they placed on the need to create workers' organisations and to direct the PD's activities

(24) Julio César Jobet, Recabarren, pp126-128.

(25) Both the Coalición and the Alianza Liberal were created in 1891 when the support of a majority in Congress became essential for presidents. Although the Coalición survived until 1919, when it was replaced by the Unión Nacional, and the Alianza Liberal until 1925, their component parties tended to change sides when they wished. Presidents, for their part, felt no binding obligation to rule with the coalition which had elected them. Lia Cortes and Jordi Fuentes Diccionario Político de Chile (Santiago, 1967) pp31-33.

(26) Néctor de Petris Giesen, Historia del Partido Democrático (Memoria, Universidad de Chile, 1942) pp14-33.

more strongly towards the 'moral and economic betterment of the working class'.(27) However, although most of the socialist Democrats supported the doctrinarios in 1901, they did not begin to act as a faction within the PD until 1905. In 1906, the socialists managed to capture control of the PD for a brief period but the reglamentarios and doctrinarios combined to break their hold. In 1906, the socialists took a further step towards becoming a more cohesive group by forming the Escuela Socialista in Santiago. The Escuela Socialista came to have some 200 members and provided the Partido Obrero Socialista(POS), the immediate precursor of the PCCh, with many of its leaders.(28)

Not all socialists belonged to the POS nor was socialism the only ideology to lay claim to the allegiance of the working classes.(29) An ideology which attracted lasting support and which probably had greater influence amongst the Chilean working classes during the first two decades of this century was anarchism. Like socialism, anarchism began to bear fruits at the turn of the century - anarchists, for example, were the prime movers in the formation of the resistance societies and were prominent in a

(27) Enrique Reyes, op.cit. p42.

(28) Andrés Escobar y Carvallo in Revista Occidente, no. 122(Jan./Feb. 1960) pp6-16, gives an interesting account of the early struggles of the socialists inside the PD. Other articles by the same author in Revista Occidente, nos. 119, 120 and 121 are also useful in the study of the early working class organisations in Chile.

(29) See Julio César Jobet's Recabarren, pp93-101 for a brief account of other socialist parties which emerged at the turn of the century.

number of important strike movements, including the ill-fated Iquique strike of 1907. Although the groups and organisations generated by anarchism were usually short-lived, its ideological impact stretched far beyond those who formally embraced its ideals. In particular, anarchism helped to form and articulate two major and complementary working class attitudes which survived for some years. These were, firstly, a complete rejection of the bourgeois political process and, hence, a rejection of electoral politics; and, secondly, a belief in independent, direct action by workers' organisations. Both attitudes were to present the POS and the PCCh with formidable obstacles in the years to come.

The POS grew out of this background of burgeoning labour organisations and out of the spread of socialist ideas. But before proceeding to examine the POS and its development, mention must be made of the man who came to dominate working class politics in the second decade of this century and who is considered, to this day, to be the most prominent figure produced by the Chilean working class movement. Luis Emilio Recabarren was born into a modest family in Valparaíso in 1876. At the age of fourteen he left school to learn the trades of printing and typesetting. In 1891, he first showed his mettle by joining the Balmacedista Army with the express purpose of subverting it from within - only his youth saved him from the firing squad. Later, he joined the Constitutionalist Army, served in the Norte Chico

and rose to non-commissioned rank.(30) In 1894 he joined the PD because 'it said it sought the betterment of the working class and was a working class party'.(31) In the PD, he swiftly identified himself with the socialist current and in 1897 and 1905, together with like-minded colleagues, pledged himself to bring the PD round to socialism. The real turning point in his career came in 1903 when, already prominent in Democrat circles in Valparaíso and Santiago, he was chosen to organise the second national conference of the Congreso Social Obrero. There, he came to the attention of Gregorio Trincado, the founder of the mancomunal in Tocopilla, who invited him to go north to found and operate a newspaper for the mancomunal. Recabarren accepted Trincado's invitation, went to Tocopilla and founded El Trabajo, the first of a long line of workers' newspapers which he was to create. Recabarren's work in Tocopilla gave him the opportunity to stand as candidate for deputy for Antofagasta in 1906 - an election which he won. Congress, however, refused to seat him because of his reputation as a labour agitator and in that same year he was sentenced for his supposed involvement in the 1906 strike in Antofagasta - a strike which had ended in bloodshed. By now a figure of national prominence,

(30) For details of Recabarren's early life see Julio César Jobet's Recabarren, pp7-8 and Obras selectas de Luis Emilio Recabarren (Santiago, 1917) ppl3-15. See also Fernando Alegria Recabarren (Santiago, 1938) which, although a fictionalised biography, is generally held to adhere strictly to the known facts. Official PCCh publications generally neglect to mention Recabarren's active opposition to Balmaceda, who after his death rapidly became a hero to the Left.

(31) El Despertar de los Trabajadores, Iquique, 12.9.1912. (Cited hereafter as DTIQ.)

Recabarren fled the country to avoid arrest. He went first to Argentina, where he became involved in the Argentine Socialist Party, and then went to Europe. In Europe, where according to some accounts he met Lenin, he affiliated the PD to the Second International - although he had no authority to do so.(32) Returning to Chile in 1908, he served his gaol sentence and became active in PD politics once more.

In 1911, after quarrelling over an electoral matter with other members of the socialist faction of the PD in Santiago, Recabarren withdrew to Tarapacá where he proceeded to found another newspaper (in Iquique) and to reorganise the PD in that province in preparation for the March 1912 congressional elections.(33) While it is not altogether clear whether Recabarren had definitely decided to form a new political party at that point, the configuration of circumstances in the PD, both nationally and locally, made the emergence of a new party entirely possible, if not inevitable. With the approach of the congressional elections, the old feud between reglamentarios and doctrinarios flared up while socialist Democrats and their more conservative rivals vied for the PD's nomination as candidates in the forthcoming elections. In Iquique, Recabarren managed to secure the nomination for a deputy's seat even though a Democrat, Pedro Araya, was already sitting for that

(32) The Soviet historian Vassili Yermolaev claims that Recabarren met Lenin twice in Brussels in 1908; article by Jorge Soza Egaña in El Siglo, Santiago, 2.1.1972. Andrés Escobar y Carvallo claimed that Recabarren affiliated the PD to the Second International in Revista Occidente no. 122.

(33) Ibid. for details of Recabarren's dispute with the Santiago socialists.

constituency. Despite Araya's protests to the PD's national leadership in Santiago, the PD refused to annul Recabarren's nomination - with the result that both stood in the 1912 election.(34) In the event, both were soundly defeated but Recabarren polled 599 votes to Araya's 61 (out of a total of some 13,000 votes cast).(35)

Although Recabarren and the PD in Tarapacá had fully, if grudgingly, endorsed a pact which the PD had made with the Coalición to exchange votes in the 1912 elections, the failure of the pact to produce the promised results in Tarapacá and elsewhere in Chile and the news that the PD leadership intended to take its coalition politics a stage further by supporting a government majority in Congress, finally persuaded Recabarren and others to break from the PD.(36) Recabarren justified the creation of the POS in June 1912 on the grounds that, in recent years, the policies of the PD's leaders had not served the interests of the working classes. In particular, he claimed that the policy of electoral pacting had worked to the advantage of the exploiting classes and that the national leadership was bourgeois, had no knowledge of the doctrinal and material needs of the people and showed no concern to carry out propaganda activities or create a definite party press.(37) In sum, Recabarren accused the national leadership of handing the workers over to bourgeois exploitation - a

(34) DTIQ 22.2.1912.

(35) El Tarapacá Iquique 7.3.1912.

(36) El Grito Popular Iquique 6.9.1911; DTIQ 11.5.1912.

(37) DTIQ 21.5.1912. Recabarren expanded on these reasons in DTIQ 6.6.1912.

sentiment which was evidently shared by many socialists inside the PD since the appearance of the POS in Tarapacá coincided with the emergence of similar break-away groups in Santiago and Punta Arenas.

The POS had a life-span of nine and a half years before it changed its name to the PCCh in 1922. During much of that time, it was irrelevant to the main stream of Chilean politics and it usually existed in small, semi-autonomous groups which suffered from a high turnover in membership and bitter internal disputes. Despite this, the POS came to wield considerable influence in the trade union movement and it developed a series of characteristics which were carried over into the PCCh.

Although the POS was founded independently in Tarapacá, Santiago and Puntas Arenas in mid-1912, it was not until 1915 that these groups celebrated their first National Congress and created a national organisation. Both before and after 1913, the most important centre of socialist activity was Tarapacá, with its close links with the nitrate industry, its relative numerical strength and the dominant personality and energy of its leader, Recabarren.

At the time of the POS's foundation, Tarapacá was one of the newest provinces of the Republic, part of the spoils of the War of the Pacific. The province consisted of some 58,000 square kilometres of the Atacama Desert, the arid monotony of which was interrupted only by the nitrate camps and the occasional oasis. In 1907 Tarapacá had only three towns of any importance and all of them were on the

coast. Iquique, the capital, had a population of 40,000; Arica and Pisagua had populations of some 4,000 each. Of a total population of 110,000, 42,291 were directly involved in the nitrate industry.(38) Almost all the population were migrants from the more southerly provinces of Chile or from Bolivia and Peru. Indeed, in 1914, out of a total workforce of 50,000, almost half came from these two neighbouring countries.(39)

In 1912, Tarapacá was very much a frontier society, lacking the sub-structure of social, cultural and educational organisations associated with more mature population centres. The brothel and the tavern rather than the church and the school were the dominant social organisations. Indeed, neither the Church nor the Conservative Party had been formally organised in the province. Politically it was the domain of the Radical and Liberal Democratic parties but these only became active at election times. This absence of social amenities and cultural and education facilities had marked effects on the POS's activities. The POS adopted propaganda forms designed, to some extent at least, to fill the vacuum. It formed drama groups which toured the nitrate pampa performing plays, often written by the workers themselves, which held a clear socialist or moral message. The concert party or velada was a propaganda form particularly favoured by the POS. Sometimes hundreds of workers would attend

(38) Enrique Reyes, op.cit. p34.

(39) DTIQ 6.8.1914.

veladas to hear musical performances, recitations, declamations and speeches on topics which ranged from the work of socialism to the evils of drink, from the economic misery of the people to the true ends of the Boy Scout Movement.(40) Public meetings and debates, used throughout the Republic to popularise the socialist message, assumed an unusual prominence in Tarapacá. Indeed, in the coastal towns, where there were fewer restrictions on freedom of meeting, such debates became something of an institution. In Iquique, for example, thousands of workers gathered in the main square at week-ends to hear anarchists and socialists defend their viewpoints and, on one occasion, a debate between Catholics and socialists on the existence of God drew an audience of 15,000.(41)

The main implement of socialist propaganda in Tarapacá and elsewhere, however, was the party newspaper. In 1916, the POS had seven newspapers in Iquique, Antofagasta, Taltal, Santiago, Concepción, Valparaíso and Puntas Arenas.(42) Although most were short-lived ventures, El Despertar de los Trabajadores of Iquique and El Socialista (after 1922 El Comunista) of Antofagasta survived until 1927 and El Socialista of Valparaíso was published between 1915 and 1918. The newspapers of Iquique and Antofagasta were published several times a week, and sometimes daily, while El Socialista of Valparaíso was a weekly publication. Although the circulation of these

(40) Ibid. 21.7.1914.

(41) Ibid. 4.12.1914.

(42) Ibid. 27.4.1916. For a detailed study of the workers' press between 1900 and 1930, see Osvaldo Arias Escobedo La Prensa Obrera en Chile, (Santiago, 1970).

newspapers were sometimes in the region of 3,000-4,000 for each issue, suggesting a large readership, they suffered from continual financial difficulties.(43) The POS newspapers constantly undertook the propagation of socialist ideals through explanatory articles, through poetry and song and through the publication of serious literature in a serialised form. The newspaper presses were used also for the publication of a wide variety of pamphlet literature.

The importance of the POS newspapers lay not only in their propaganda activities but also in the fact that they constituted the backbone of the party's organisation. They provided the premises for the meetings of local POS groups and served as a training ground for party activists. The few paid jobs on the newspaper were given to men who were, to all intents and purposes, full-time party functionaries exclusively dedicated to the work of propaganda and organisation. Furthermore, their training as newspapermen permitted the movement of these early party functionaries from one part of the country to another as the needs of the party dictated. Indeed, the list of first and second generation leaders of the PCCh who received their training in this manner, often from Recabarren himself, is impressive.(44)

(43) DTIQ, for example, the POS's longest running and most successful newspaper, reported an average monthly debt of 500 pesos in 1914 and debts totalling 4,300 pesos in 1917; 21.5.1914; 17.5.1917.

(44) Salvador Barra Woll, Elías Lafertte, Salvador Ocampo, Galvarino Gil, Maclovio Galdames, Rufino Rosas, Ramón Sepúlveda Leal, Luis A. Hernández - all prominent in the PCCh in the early years of its life, were trained in this way.

The nature of the socialism which the POS attempted to spread was characterised by vagueness, romanticism and an absence of profound analysis. Yet the essential elements were clear enough; society was divided into two classes, the owners of the means of production and the workers who possessed only their mental and physical resources - the former living in decadent luxury at the expense of the latter. The Socialists proposed the creation of a more just and egalitarian society in which 'production is a common factor as is also the fruits of production' and where all would be 'masters of the fruits of their labour, free, equal, honoured and intelligent'.(45) The POS's goal, then, was revolutionary reorganisation of society along utopian socialist lines.

If the POS's long term goals were revolutionary, the means it chose to effect them were those which had already been tried and tested by the socialist wing of the PD. Socialists were to participate in elections for public office and were exhorted to form trade unions and cooperatives. The POS's adoption of political means to achieve its ends earned it the implacable hostility of the anarchists who regarded participation in the bourgeois political process, however noble the objective, as rank reformism and class treachery. And indeed, without accepting the anarchists' equation of all political activity with reformism, the POS clearly was a reformist party both in action and ideology. Recabarren, for example, identified socialism as 'the increase of individuals who perfect themselves, who modify their bad

(45) Julio César Jobet, Recabarren, pp33-38.

habits and who invite others to perfect themselves? (46)

Similarly, the POS welcomed the few attempts which the authorities made to ameliorate the lot of the workers and it positively encouraged the state to take an active part in regulating relations between labour and capital. (47)

Conversely, the POS rejected direct violent action as proposed by some anarchist groups - arguing that the gains made by such means would be temporary at best. (48)

But despite its reformism, the POS was a revolutionary force in at least two senses. In the first place, it was revolutionary in the emphasis it placed on the need to organise trade unions and cooperatives, which were seen not only as necessary to defend the workers' immediate interests but also as the key organisations in the defeat of the capitalist system and as the nuclear units upon which the new society would be built - beliefs which brought the POS very close to its anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist rivals. (49) Secondly, socialism as purveyed by the POS was also intended to bring about revolutionary changes in personal behaviour and habits. Impressed by the visible evidence of the working classes' physical and moral decadence, particularly in Tarapacá where drunkenness and venereal disease were rife, the POS developed a strong streak of puritanism. Drinking, whoring, gambling and smoking were the objects of varying degrees of condemnation in the

(46) DTIQ, 2.7.1914.

(47) See, for example, ibid. 16.5.1912; 13.8.1914; 21.8.14.

(48) Ibid., 2.7.1914.

(49) Recabarren was still thinking along these lines in 1921. See, for example, his draft constitution for a Federal Socialist Republic of Chile, reproduced in Julio Meise González Historia de Chile, pp463-475.

socialist press and members of the POS were expected to turn their backs on the popular vices which prevented them from being good husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. The idea that it was not possible to be a good socialist without being a good family man of moderate habits was carried over into the PCCh.

Other striking features of the POS's ideology were its anti-clericalism, its anti-militarism and its internationalism. While all these features were common to most socialist movements in the early twentieth century, conditions and events in Tarapacá and elsewhere in Chile made them particularly relevant. Thus, the POS's anti-clericalism was fuelled by the decision of the Catholic Church to establish a bishopric in Iquique in 1912. In response, the POS launched an anti-clerical weekly paper, El Bonete, nominally edited by Elías Lafertte, which carried out a vitriolic campaign against the Church and priesthood until it ran into trouble with the local courts.(50) In 1915, other socialist newspapers returned to the attack when some priests attempted to act upon their social christian principles and form trade unions.(51) By the end of the decade, however, this particular feature of the POS's ideology was becoming less pronounced.

The POS had no particular need to draw on the traditions of European or any other brand of socialism to be

(50) El Bonete, Iquique, had a circulation of some 2,000 copies. See the issue for 15.2.1913. Elías Lafertte claimed that he was only the editor for legal purposes; the real editor was Aguirre Bretón; Elías Lafertte Vida de un Comunista (Santiago, 1957) p98.

(51) DTIQ 24.12.1915.

anti-militarist since, in the twentieth century at any rate, the Chilean Army had killed far more labour 'agitators' than it had foreign enemies. But the POS's anti-militarism tended to be rather muted for two reasons. Firstly, the Chilean Armed Forces had the power to accuse and, through their own courts, to judge those who offended against their dignity or who attempted to subvert discipline. Secondly, the POS's attitude towards the Armed Forces was essentially ambivalent. While the POS clearly saw the Armed Forces as the instrument of class oppression, it also identified them as the possible source of radical and even revolutionary change in Chile - thus, long before the Conspiracy of 1919 and the military golpes of 1924 and 1925, the POS had defended the Army's right to think for itself.(52)

The POS's deep sense of internationalism was one of its most pronounced and enduring features. Rejecting narrow 'bourgeois' concepts of patriotism - they greeted patriotic celebrations with silence or a caustic comment on the inevitable drunken disorders which marked them - the POS studied the development of the world working class movements with a passionate interest and concern. Indeed, shortly after its foundation the POS applied to join the Second International and, while full membership does not

(52) See, for example, a series of articles on the Masonry and the Army in which its right to press for certain reforms is defended. DTIQ 15.8.1916; 16.8.1916; 17.8.1916. See Frederick M. Nunn, Chilean Politics 1920-1931: The Honorable Mission of the Armed Forces (Albuquerque, 1970) pp11-12, pp47-87 for details of the Conspiracy and the golpes.

appear to have been granted, it remained in contact with the Second International for several years.(53) However, the POS did not confine its internationalism to passive theorizing. A few Chilean socialists, most notably Recabarren, became active in the Argentine Socialist Party- Recabarren helped to form the group which later became the Communist Party of Argentina.(54) Conversely, some foreigners became prominent in the POS although, as a group, they do not appear to have had a great impact on the over-all membership despite their presence in large numbers on the nitrate pampa. Nevertheless, an Argentine, Mariano Rivas, and an Italian, Loggia Fratti, became prominent in the POS while some Bolivian workers, who learned the lessons of political and trade union organisation on the nitrate pampa, became a prominent force in the socialist movements of their own country.(55) The POS's internationalism is also well-illustrated by the fact that Argentine socialists were usually invited to National Party Congresses - a practice which was carried over into the PCCh. The POS also demonstrated its internationalism by celebrating May Day with public meetings

- (53) Recabarren sent a report to the Second International giving details of POS activities in 1912: DFIQ 13.2.1913. In 1917, the POS transmitted its fears to the Second International that the Spanish Socialist Party was urging Spain to enter the First World War. It did this through the Argentine Socialist Party because that party was a member of the Second International and the POS 'was not yet able to be so'. DFIQ 5.6.1917.
- (54) Comisión Nacional de Educación (PCCh) Luis Emilio Recabarren, forjador del movimiento revolucionario chileno (Santiago, 1972) p5 and pl1.
- (55) Guillermo Lora Historia del Movimiento Obrero Boliviano 1923-1933 (La Paz)(1970) pp134-135.

and, occasionally, with the withdrawal of labour. At times the POS demonstrated against specific events abroad - as, for example, in 1916 when 2,000 workers in Iquique gathered to protest against Carranza's treatment of strikers in Mexico City.(56)

These then, were the POS's most prominent ideological features but what of its organisational structure? Although the POS had no national organisation until 1915 and although the internal organisation of the local parties tended to differ, the basic unit in Tarapacá was generally the section which met periodically to discuss ideology and the problems of the day and which elected a five-man administrative committee to conduct the section's affairs. In Santiago, however, some attempt was made to place party work on a more professional footing by appointing permanent commissions to deal with such aspects of party activity as trade union affairs, finance, press and propaganda.(57) Whatever the local variations, the internal processes of the party were characterised by openness and democracy. All posts within the party organisation were filled by election and the POS's candidates for public office were selected by the same method - as were the editors and administrators of the party newspapers. But this is not to say that Recabarren could not impose his wishes in spite of the democratic process.(58)

The size and social complexion of the POS are

(56) DTIQ 3.10.1916.

(57) El Socialista, Santiago, 15.5.1913.

(58) See below, p40 for a description of one incident in which he did this.

matters for conjecture since no accurate statistics were compiled of either. However, it seems likely that the POS in Tarapacá had a membership of between 300 and 400 in 1915 and by 1917 had grown to some 800 members.(59) If this last figure is correct, a not unreasonable national projection for the POS in 1917 would be around 1,500 members. In social terms, the POS was predominantly working class but, if the men who occupied sectional office are any indication, the bulk of the POS's support came from the skilled rather than the unskilled workers. In the early years, there were a scattering of professional men, doctors and lawyers, who usually made their appearance as POS candidates in public elections. Earlier mention has been made of the large number of foreign workers on the nitrate pampa but they do not appear to have joined the POS in any great number. In 1917, admittedly in an article defending the POS from the charge that it was an alien element in Chilean society, it was claimed that only eight foreigners were members of the party.(60) The wealthy were not excluded from membership but POS puritanism did lead it to ban brothel and tavern keepers and although masons and members of Catholic brotherhoods could become members, they were warned not to proselytise inside the POS. The party made a special appeal to women and in 1913, a Centro Femenino was founded in Iquique under the leadership of Recabarren's compañera Teresa Flores. Although the Centro eventually

(59) DTIQ 21.11.1917.

(60) Ibid.

laid claim to some 40 members, it soon disappeared in a welter of personal antagonisms.(61) Nevertheless, a few women did make their mark as effective orators and propagandists for the Socialist cause in Tarapacá.(62)

The POS's evolution as an electoral force was considerably hampered by its refusal to follow the example of the PD and make pacts with other parties for the purposes of trading votes. Thus, although the POS elected its first municipal councillors in 1913, it was not until 1921, after it had become more flexible on the question of electoral pacts, that it managed to elect its first congressmen. Nevertheless, the POS's voting strength in Tarapacá and Antofagasta showed a steady increase - in the congressional elections of 1915, the POS polled 356 votes in these two provinces while in 1918, this total had increased to 871.(63) Nationally, the POS's voting strength increased from 580 in 1915 to an estimated 4,000 in 1920.(64)

If the POS was unsuccessful in its early efforts to elect congressmen, it had greater success in municipal elections and in 1915, it had six municipal representatives in Tarapacá alone.(65) The election of municipal councillors was important for several reasons. Firstly, it gave the POS a public platform on which to air its views and

(61) Ibid. 11.10.1913.

(62) Recabarren cited Teresa Flores and Rebeca Barnes, the schoolgirl daughter of one of the founder members of the POS, as particularly effective orators. Ibid. 18.2.1915.

(63) Ibid. 28.3.1915; 6.3.1918.

(64) Ibid. 28.3.1915. El Socialista, Antofagasta, 28.3.1920.

(65) DTIQ 13.4.1915.

programme. Secondly, it gave the POS access to municipal jobs which could be given to activists and supporters - a development which, in its turn, gave the POS an additional source of finance since, by 1917, it had been decided that all party members who received jobs in this way should contribute 10% of their wages to POS funds.(66) While POS municipal employees appear to have been rather lax in complying with this directive, it was a custom which was carried over into the PCCh.

In 1915, the POS held its first national congress in Santiago, a meeting which was attended by 11 delegates representing Iquique, Antofagasta, Taltal, Valparaíso, Viña del Mar, Concepción and Puntas Arenas.(67) The Congress was presided over by a recently-elected Argentine Socialist deputy, Ramón Mery, and a declaration of principles and programme of action based on those of the Tarapacá POS were adopted. Interestingly enough, it had been the intention to adopt the principles and programme of the Argentine Socialist Party but Mery forgot to bring copies with him - and he had to leave the Congress early because he had neglected to obtain the necessary leave of absence from the Argentine Parliament.(68) The first POS Congress decided to create a Comité Ejecutivo Nacional(CEN), with its seat in Valparaíso, to co-ordinate and direct the activities of the 17 sections which existed throughout the country.(69)

(66) Ibid. 14.11.1917.

(67) See ibid. 20.5.1915; 26.5.1915; 27.5.1915; 3.6.1915 for the official report on the POS's first National Congress.

(68) Ibid. 20.5.1915.

(69) Ibid. 26.5.1915.

The first action which the CEN undertook was to found a central newspaper, El Socialista of Valparaíso. However, despite the existence of the CEN, local sections appear to have gone very much their own way. Most failed to respond to CEN demands to help finance its activities and the new newspaper and CEN circulars were often ignored. Indeed, when the CEN tried to arrange another National Party Congress in 1916, only six of the nineteen sections bothered to reply and, despite other efforts in later years, it was not until 1920, on the eve of a presidential election, that the POS held its second national congress.(70) But, if the CEN lacked effectiveness in some directions, it was active in settling internal disputes in the party and did send delegates to the north and south to encourage the growth of new sections and to create new newspapers.

Like most new organisations in the process of formulating their structure, ideology and tactics, the POS suffered from a series of bitter internal conflicts - conflicts which were generally heavily larded by personal antagonisms. The issues which caused the POS most difficulty were concerned with electoral politics. In the first place, many socialists, particularly those on the nitrate pampa, shared the anarchist antipathy towards electoral politics and, although little direct evidence remains, small groups of members appear to have broken away when the POS

(70) Ibid. 23.9.1916. El Socialista, Antofagasta, 10 - 13.6.1920 contains the official reports on the POS's Second National Congress.

leadership insisted on participating in public elections. Certainly, the repeated and rather desperate declarations of the POS that it was 'not a political party but part of the social and economic organisation of humanity which uses the political struggle in its redemptive and progressive work' give some indication of the strength of anarchist sentiment.(71) Secondly, after 1913 when the POS elected its first municipal representatives, the problems of whether to join or support a majority on the municipal council (in effect, to practice coalition politics at the local level) and of the POS's relationship with its councillors, emerged. These particular issues caused the POS to split in Santiago in 1913; the POS section in Pisagua had a similar experience in 1916.(72)

The conflict in 1913 in Santiago is worthy of more detailed examination since it involved Manuel Hidalgo, later the leader of the Chilean Trotskyist Party, Izquierda Comunista. In 1913, Hidalgo was elected to the municipal council in Santiago - the first POS member to be elected to public office. According to his enemies, Hidalgo's behaviour as a councillor left much to be desired. He failed to propagate the socialist programme at council meetings, neglected to give regular reports on his activities to the POS in Santiago and used his influence to secure municipal funds for a mutualist society to which he belonged.(73)

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- (71) El Socialista, Valparaíso, 17.9.1915. Recabarren was still repeating this statement in 1923 - after the PCCh had been founded. Federación Obrera 17.5.1923.
- (72) See DTIQ 16.4.1916; 10.5.1916 for details of the conflict in Pisagua.
- (73) See El Socialista, Santiago, 2nd fortnight, August, 1913, for the case against Hidalgo.

Hidalgo was expelled from the POS section - the first of many disciplinary actions taken against him - but with a group of supporters founded his own POS section and began to publish his own newspaper, La Voz Socialista. Articles in that newspaper attributed Hidalgo's expulsion to personal malice and to his refusal to find municipal jobs for the relatives of some of his opponents.(74) The conflict in Santiago dragged on for some time and, in 1915, one of the first acts of the newly-formed CEN was to dissolve both sections and, without expressing its opinion on the rights of the matter, to leave Hidalgo outside the POS for the sake of internal harmony.(75) Even so, the dispute continued to cause frictions. In 1916, the POS in Puntas Arenas declared its independence from the CEN partly because the reconstituted Santiago Section continued to be dominated by Hidalgo's supporters while Hidalgo himself incurred the wrath of many Socialists when, late in that year, he suggested that the POS should rejoin the PD since their programmes were now very similar.(76) The dispute in Santiago effectively undermined the work of the POS in that area during the early years and, indeed, the Santiago section continued to be a source of considerable trouble for the national leadership - although, not always because of

(74) La Voz Socialista, Santiago, 20.10.1913. Hidalgo's supporters included Carlos Alberto Martínez, later a founder member of the Partido Socialista de Chile and Enrique Díaz Vera - both of them later opposed the affiliation of the POS to the Third International.

(75) El Socialista, Valparaíso, 31.12.1915.

(76) Ibid. 14.10.1916; DTIQ 15.12.1916.

Hidalgo's actions.(77)

In 1913, another conflict, of rather less importance but also worthy of mention since it involved Recabarren, occurred in Tarapacá. On returning from a tour of the nitrate pampa, Recabarren found that in his absence a man of whom he did not approve had been elected by the POS in Iquique to fill the position of administrator of the Bakers' Co-operative. Recabarren immediately launched a vituperative campaign against the new administrator and those who had elected him - an action which caused them to withdraw from the POS and to respond in kind. In an open letter entitled 'Lord, mitigate your wrath, have pity upon us' - printed in the right-wing daily El Tarapacá - they delivered a blistering counter-attack, accusing Recabarren of over-concern with electoral matters, of mismanagement of the party press and of overweening pride and arrogance.(78) While the incident was not important in itself it does suggest that Recabarren's autocratic ways and imperious temperament were at least contributory factors to internal conflict in both the POS and the PCCh - a fact which Communist historians tend to neglect.

While the POS appears to have experienced considerable internal friction during its life, no new party emerged as a result of internal dissidence. Indeed, many, like Salvador Barra Woll (a leader of the Tarapacá rebels in 1913)

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- (77) In 1920, for example, the POS section in Santiago practically ceased to function when it was discovered that one of its prominent members, Evaristo Reyes - a notable figure in POS politics nationally - was quite literally a police agent. See Claridad, Santiago, 11.12.1920; 23.12.1920.
- (78) El Tarapacá, Iquique, 17.5.1913.

and Hidalgo, were reabsorbed into the party at a later date and became prominent leaders of the PCCh. Other dissidents appear to have returned to their original allegiances or dropped out of politics altogether.

Electorally weak, its organisation dependent on the continued survival of the POS newspapers and the energies of Recabarren and a handful of close associates, the POS might well have remained a party of only regional significance or even disappeared altogether if it were not for its efforts and increasing influence in the field of trade unionism.

From the very beginning the POS did its utmost to encourage the growth of trade unions and associated organisations such as cooperatives and instruction societies. In the month immediately following its foundation, the POS created a series of craft unions amongst the foundrymen, mechanics, lightermen, cobblers, miners and carpenters, stokers and clerical employees of Iquique.(79) Most of these unions did not survive for long and the POS began to look for some way of co-ordinating and unifying the activities of the various unions. Its first effort in this direction was to help create a Cámara del Trabajo in Iquique - a form of organisation which had been influential in the early development of the Italian trade union movement.(80) However, the Cámara had scarcely begun to function before unions of other political complexions, most notably those

(79) DFIQ 18.2.1913.

(80) Ibid. 2.10.1913.

with Radical and Liberal Democratic allegiances, began to object to the participation of the POS in its proceedings. the POS was forced to withdraw and, after a few uncomfortable months of existence, the Cámara perished.(81)

By 1915, the POS had come to the conclusion that existing trade unions were failing to fulfil two of their essential functions - propaganda in favour of trade unionism itself and the regulation of relations between capital and labour. Moreover, the POS felt that existing trade unions were not only failing in these duties but were positively aiding the bourgeoisie by retarding the unification of the proletariat.(82) The POS suggested that the solution to this problem was to form trade union sections on a craft basis inside the party itself and to give these the task of forming trade unions of all types. There is no evidence to suggest that this solution was ever adopted and the POS soon returned to the search for a form of umbrella organisation. By 1915, a Unión de Obreros y Obreras en General was created in Valparaíso and Santiago with socialist support but it only had a fleeting existence. In 1917, some socialists were giving support to the Unión Federal de Chile, a trade union confederation dominated by anarcho-syndicalists which claimed a total membership of some 8,000 in that year.(83)

By 1917, however, the organisation which was to

(81) Ibid. 2.10.1913.

(82) Ibid. 25.3.1915.

(83) El Socialista, Valparaíso, 14.7.1917.

produce the first really important trade union confederation had already been in existence for some eight years. The Gran Federación Obrera de Chile (GFOCh) was founded in 1909 by workers of various trades employed by the state railways who, assisted by Conservative lawyers, launched a campaign to retrieve a 10% deduction from their wages which the government had imposed the previous year.(84) After this battle had been won, the GFOCh continued to function as a mutualist society and its conservative principles earned it the hostility of Recabarren and the POS. Recabarren was incensed particularly by the custom of some GFOCh consejos (branches) of having their union banners blessed in Church and he accused the GFOCh of being nothing but a 'clerical society, intended to corral the workers and guarantee liberty of exploitation'.(85) Recabarren's attacks on the GFOCh provoked a spirited response from Eduardo Gentoso, the editor of La Locomotora, the journal of the state railway machinists and an ex-colleague of Recabarren in the PD. In a series of highly personalised articles, Gentoso accused Recabarren of being an ambitious trickster, the self-appointed Tsar of the working class movement, whose private life and public actions could not stand up to scrutiny.(86)

The open hostilities between Recabarren and the GFOCh came to an end in 1915 and by 1917, Recabarren had

(84) Jorge Barriá Serón Los movimientos sociales de Chile: 1910-1929 (Santiago, 1960) pp109-111. (Cited hereafter as Movimientos: 1910-26.)

(85) DTIQ 27.5.19.3.

(86) La Locomotora, Santiago, 27.12.1913; 17.1.1914; 30.5.1914.

evidently been persuaded by other socialists that the GFOCh could become the basis for a strong, national and radical trade union confederation. By September 1917, the task of converting the GFOCh from an essentially conservative and mutualist organisation into a vehicle for the militant and left-wing sectors of the working class movement was clearly underway. At a GFOCh National Convention, held in that month in Valparaíso, POS delegates and their allies managed to persuade the GFOCh to open its membership to all workers of whatever occupation. At the same Convention, the decision was taken to change the name of the GFOCh to the Federación Obrera de Chile(FOCh).(87)

At the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, November 1917, the POS was beginning to become something more than a regional party but was still very much at the margin of national events. In ideology and action, the POS sometimes resembled a puritanical version of its parent, the PD, and at others, its anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist rivals. But despite its rather curious amalgam of revolutionary and reformist ideas and practices, the POS's commitment to a revolutionary reorganisation of society and to the principle of working class internationalism was prominent and deeply rooted. Moreover, if, as yet, the POS lacked national consequence, it possessed two great assets - a leader of national reputation, Recabarren, and a growing influence in the trade union movement. Events inside and outside Chile in

(87) Jorge Barriá Serón Movimientos: 1910-26, pp112-115.

the years following the end of the First World War transformed the POS into a political force of national significance and led it to take the decision to join the Third International and change its name to the PCCh.

The end of the First World War thrust Chile into an economic crisis of unusual severity. As demand for nitrates slumped, a chain reaction was ignited which drove the whole economy into a sharp recession, affecting not only the proletariat but also broad middle class sectors as well. Unemployment and rising prices generated an intense social unrest which drew political inspiration from the Russian Revolution and from the wave of similar attempts to sweep away the old order elsewhere in the world. By 1919, as a result of these pressures and influences, FOCh had grown considerably in strength and had taken a sharp turn to the left by adopting a revolutionary declaration of principles which called for the abolition of the capitalist system and its replacement by FOCh, which would undertake the responsibility of administering the country and the economy.(88) In the same year, the anarcho-syndicalists founded their most powerful and long-lasting national organisation, the International Workers of the World(IWW). Middle class groups, together with workers, gave their support to the Asamblea Obrera de Alimentación Nacional, an organisation which differed from earlier attempts to campaign for the reduction of food prices in its demands for general

(88) Ibid. pp119-125.

radical reform.(89) Finally, students, often of middle class origins, began to cooperate with workers in strikes and demonstrations and to create night schools for the workers, drawing their inspiration not only from the Russian Revolution but also from the University Reform movements of Argentina and Peru.(90)

Despite the involvement of middle class sectors in post-war social unrest, government did not adapt its traditional response to manifestations of popular discontent. Middle class university students suffered arbitrary arrest, torture and occasionally death together with the workers whose cause they had espoused. Moreover, in the same year, the government cynically manipulated fears of war with Peru, in part at least, to whip up popular feeling against students and labour leaders.(91)

Social unrest and political turbulence reached its climax in 1920, the year in which Arturo Alessandri was elected to the Presidency of the Republic. By 1920, the sometimes weak, ineffective and corrupt governments of the Parliamentary Republic had undermined not only public confidence in the constitutional system and brought politics into disrepute but had brought into question the right to rule of the traditionally dominant class. The tightly-knit

(89) Jorge Barría Serón El movimiento obrero en Chile (Santiago, 1971) p51.

(90) See Frank Bonilla and Myron Glazer Student Politics in Chile (New York, 1970) pp32-57 for the impact of the post-war crises on Chilean students.

(91) Carlos Vicuña Fuentes La Tiranía en Chile (2 vols., Santiago, 2nd edition 1945) i. Chapter 3 gives a lively account of post-war popular unrest and the measures the Sanfuentes government took against it.

Oligarchy which had successfully adapted itself to mid-nineteenth century economic and social change had lost its cohesion in the face of the massive changes which the country had experienced since 1880. With the Oligarchy divided and the political system which it had devised discredited, the newly-emergent middle class, supported by large sectors of the proletariat, were ready to challenge the traditional ruling class for power. In 1920 this challenge was personified in the rival candidacies of Arturo Alessandri and Luis Barros Borgoño for the Presidency. Alessandri was as much a product of traditional politics as Barros Borgoño but he presented himself as the protagonist of all those who wanted radical change. In a demagogic campaign which aroused the wild enthusiasm of the masses - and the fears of his opponents - he promised a series of sweeping social and constitutional reforms.(92) While Barros Borgoño was no enemy to moderate reform, he found himself cast in the role of defender of the status quo and of the Oligarchy and, in an extremely close and bitterly-fought contest, he was defeated in his attempt to become President.(93)

Alessandri, on becoming President, soon found that it was no easy matter to redeem his election pledges. A hostile Congress was controlled by his opponents who were motivated as much by a deep distrust and hatred of his personality and his demagogic methods as by a rejection of

(92) See Ricardo Donoso, op.cit., I. pp240-265, for an account of the 1920 election campaign.

(93) Ibid. p263. Alessandri received 177 votes in the Electoral College to Barros Borgoño's 176.

his reform programme. They placed formidable obstacles in his path. Indeed, shortly after Alessandri came to office, he was locked into a bitter confrontation with Congress - a situation which was terminated only by the military golpe of September 1924. As confrontation continued, ministerial instability increased, pressing economic and social problems were left without solution and even the routine tasks of government were neglected.(94)

By the time the POS took the decision to join the Third International, the post-war crises had already converted it into a political force of importance, mainly because of its close links with the FOCh. The rapid growth of the FOCh in the post-war years - from 4,500 members in 1917, to 20,000 in 1919, to an estimated 80,000 in 1921 - had given a tremendous boost to the POS's fortunes.(95) Although the POS's numbers probably still remained relatively small, it managed to consolidate its influence in FOCh and, indeed, in 1919, acting in concert with left-wing Democrats and anarchists, it had succeeded in capturing control of the national executive - the Junta Ejecutivo Federal (JEF) - and in persuading FOCh to adopt a revolutionary declaration of principles. As FOCh expanded, it gave the POS access to

(94) See Ricardo Donoso opcit., I. Chapters 15, 17 and 18 for a description of these events from a viewpoint hostile to Alessandri.

(95) Jorge Barria Serón Movimientos: 1910-26, p112 and p120. Other writers have suggested that FOCh membership reached as high as 200,000 in the early 1920s. See, for example, R.J. Alexander Communism in Latin America (New Jersey, 1957) p173.

additional means of propaganda (most notably a new national newspaper, La Federación Obrera) and to new sources of facilities and finance.(96) Where the POS was strong, particularly in the northern nitrate provinces, it could use FOCh premises for its meetings and as social centres and it could ensure that the few paid provincial officials of the FOCh were Socialists. Nevertheless, despite the growth of the POS's power and influence, large sectors of the FOCh's membership remained apolitical or retained their allegiance for one of the established parties. Indeed, according to one source, 15% of the delegates to the FOCh's National Convention held in December 1920 were Radicals and 2% Conservatives and Liberals.(97) Even amongst the radicalised sectors of the FOCh, the POS was outnumbered by Democrats and anarchists - and it was only by working with these groups that the POS was able to exert its influence over the FOCh.

With the dramatic increase in the FOCh's membership, its potential as a political and electoral force became increasingly evident. Although the anarchists fiercely resisted the FOCh's drift into electoral politics, by 1920 the FOCh was allowing local organisations to participate in elections on an informal basis - but it continued to endorse the principle of non-involvement in bourgeois

(96) In 1924, La Federación Obrera, cited hereafter as Federación Obrera, was re-named Justicia.

(97) Article by L.Oscar Guzmán in Adelante, Talcahuano, 7.12.1920.

political contests.(98) According to one source, the FOCh contributed twenty votes to Alessandri in the Electoral College in the 1920 presidential elections - but, given the limited franchise and the high rate of abstentionism, twenty votes seems an excessive claim.(99) Nevertheless, it is by no means improbable that FOCh support was decisive in Alessandri's victory since, in the event, Alessandri won by the extremely narrow margin of one vote in the Electoral College. Moreover, if the FOCh's voting strength had little to do with Alessandri's victory, the popular pressure exerted directly or indirectly by FOCh and other organisations on the Tribunal de Honor (created to adjudicate between the two presidential candidates), probably helped to tip the balance in Alessandri's favour. If it is difficult to gauge FOCh's impact on the result of the 1920 presidential elections, in the March 1921 congressional elections eight FOCh members of diverse political persuasions (2 Socialists, 1 Radical and 5 Democrats) were elected to the Chamber of Deputies with some support from their local FOCh organisations.(100)

The FOCh's potential as an electoral force gave rise to the idea that the POS, the PD and the FOCh should fuse to form a new Labour Party along British lines - an idea which evidently was given some encouragement by the

(98) Jorge Barria Serón Movimientos 1910-26 pp132-134.

(99) Federación Obrera 5.11.1921.

(100) El Heraldó, Arica, 17.3.1921. The Socialist deputies were Recabarren and Luis Victor Cruz, the Radical was Santiago Labarca and the Democrats were Correa Ramírez, Pradenas Muñoz, Vargas Marquez, Oscar Chanks and Manuel Navarrete.

Socialists.(101) By December 1920, when the FOCh held its Third National Convention in Santiago, a significant number of delegates were apparently in favour of this idea and only a last minute switch by Recabarren prevented the immediate formation of the new party.(102) Instead the Convention agreed to defer the decision on the new party until December 1921 when the next FOCh Convention was scheduled to meet. At the same time, it was decided to consider affiliation to the Third International - a question which was also to be resolved in December 1921.

At the FOCh Convention which met at Rancagua in December 1921, the issue of a new Labour Party was given short shrift by Recabarren who presented a motion which prohibited the FOCh from cooperating with any party which held collaborationist or reformist positions. This motion, which was passed by 77 to 33 votes, was aimed directly against the PD which had announced, prior to the Convention, that it intended to continue collaborating with traditional parties inside and outside Congress as it saw fit.(103) With the success of this motion, the special PD delegates who had come to the Convention withdrew and discussion of a

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- (101) Some Socialists were apparently impressed by the British Labour Party's evolution from 'gross empiricism' to socialism, as manifested in its 1918 programme. They evidently hoped that the creation of a similar party in Chile would harness the trade union movement to political action - and help to overcome the apoliticism and anarchist sentiments of many workers. See articles in ETIQ 29.6.1921; 2.7.1921.
- (102) Adelante, Talcahuano, 16.12.1920. Letter from Juan Pradenas Muñoz.
- (103) La Nación, Santiago, 27.12.1921.

new Labour Party effectively ceased.

The Convention then proceeded to consider the question of joining the Third International, or rather its recently-created trade union wing, the Internacional Sindical Roja(ISR). Greatest opposition to this step appears to have come from the anarchists who argued that the ISR was already a failure.(104) However, some Socialists and other leftists also had misgivings about affiliation and, indeed, a Socialist, Enrique Díaz Vera, presented a motion which called for the postponement of the decision to join the ISR for one year. But in the event, despite considerable support, this motion was defeated by 74 votes to 46 and a further motion affiliating the FOCh to the ISR was approved by 107 votes to 12 with 7 abstentions.(105)

Despite the overwhelming vote in favour of affiliating the FOCh to the ISR, the decision of the Rancagua Convention was not quite the unqualified triumph for Recabarren and his allies that it might appear. In the first place, it has been claimed that the twelve votes cast against the motion represented some 40% of the membership.(106) Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest that those who were deeply opposed to affiliation to the ISR had already withdrawn from the FOCh - certainly, this was the case of some conservative railworkers who left immediately after

(104) Federación Obrera 29.12.1921.

(105) Ibid. 30.12.1921.

(106) See, James O. Morris Los Elites, los intelectuales y el consenso (Santiago, 1967) p103.

FOCh decided to consider affiliation in December 1920 and it seems likely that groups of anarchists followed suit.(107) Thirdly, affiliation was not approved without Recabarren making some concessions to contrary currents in the Rancagua Convention. Thus, membership of the ISR was to be reconsidered at the next FOCh Convention, scheduled for December 1923 in Chillán, while the JEF elected at Rancagua contained representatives of those who had opposed or who had reservations about affiliation. Indeed, the Secretary General of the JEF, the Socialist Carlos Alberto Martínez, appears to have fallen into this last category and another JEF member, the anarchist Gaspar Baloffet, actually voted against affiliation.(108) Nevertheless, the JEF elected at Rancagua was clearly dominated by those who had approved the decision to join the ISR.(109)

The POS, which in 1920 began the practice of holding its national Congresses immediately after the FOCh conventions - a practice which gave a true indication of the POS's priorities during these years - agreed to consider affiliation to the Third International in December 1920 and in December

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- (107) Conservative railworkers founded a newspaper El Faro Obrero in Santiago and attacked Recabarren and the 'Bolsheviks' until June 1921. Some anarchist newspapers like El Productor of Iquique also began to attack the FOCh in mid-1921 although Federación Obrera continued to have a working relationship with the IWW until early 1923.
- (108) Martínez also opposed the POS's affiliation to the Third International. See, R.J. Alexander op.cit. p178. As Secretary General of the JEF, Martínez dragged his feet over making contact with the ISR, alleging that he did not have the ISR's correct address. Federación Obrera 18.7.1922.
- (109) See, El Socialista, Antofagasta, 5.1.1922 for those elected to the JEF at Rancagua. Of the 14 members, only the two already mentioned are identifiable as opponents of affiliation.

1921, at Rancagua, voted to join the Third International and to change the POS's name to the PCCh.

According to the official PCCh historian, Hernán Ramírez Necochea, the decision to join the Third International was hotly debated inside the POS during 1921.(109) However, the available evidence suggests that the decision was essentially non-controversial and placed little or no stress on the loyalty of the membership. Certainly, few Socialists of any prominence opposed affiliation and only one - Enrique Díaz Vera - actively campaigned against the new party in the early days.(110) It could be, of course, that the apparent absence of opposition was the result of skilful manipulation by the POS leadership - and it was true that the POS Congress of December 1920 instructed the sections to carry out a purge of 'those who have doubts as to the efficacy of our action' and not to admit socialists of the old democratic school while the party was considering affiliation.(111) However, there is no evidence to suggest that such a purge was carried out on any significant scale and since, in the past, POS dissidents had usually found some way of making their views known either through the established press or through newspapers of their own creation, the absence of any signs of such activity makes it reasonable to assume that little real opposition existed. Indeed, even though the POS instructed its newspapers to publish the 21

(109) Hernán Ramírez Necochea Origen y Formación del Partido Comunista de Chile, (Santiago, 1965) ppl25-7.

(110) Enrique Díaz Vera carried out a rather desultory campaign against the new PCCh in La Región Minera, Coronel.

(111) La Comuna, Viña del Mar, 1.1.1921.

Conditions.(112) which the Third Communist International laid down for membership and discuss the issues involved, only one, El Socialista of Antofagasta did so in a systematic manner, suggesting that most local parties felt there was little need to convince the membership.(113)

The factors which made the decision to join the Third International (Comintern) basically non-controversial seem clear enough. From its foundation, the POS had shown strong commitments to revolutionary change and to working class internationalism and by 1920 both commitments seemed better served by association with the Third International, the product of man's latest attempt to achieve the millennium, than with the Second International, which had failed to meet the challenge of the First World War. Although the POS's initial reception of the November Revolution in Russia had been mixed - in contrast to the unqualified enthusiasm with which it had greeted the fall of the Tsar - by the beginning of 1918, under the guidance of Recabarren (whose absence in

(112) The 21 Conditions were aimed at differentiating between the members of the Comintern and their reformist, social democratic rivals. The Conditions included the acceptance of democratic centralism (see Appendix A for an explanation of this concept), the purging of reformists and reformism, agitation amongst the peasantry and the armed forces and the defence of the Soviet Union.

(113) La Comuna of Viña, published until June 1921, important because of its proximity to the CEN, did not publish the 21 Conditions let alone discuss them. DFIQ published the 21 Conditions once and printed a few articles on them while Federación Obrera published the Conditions four times and made some attempt to discuss the issues involved - but only between August and mid-October 1921. At the same time, all POS newspapers gave glowing accounts of events in Russia.

Argentina at the end of 1917 probably accounts for the POS's uneven response) the POS was giving the Bolsheviks equally enthusiastic and almost entirely uncritical support.(114) Thus, the as yet untarnished reputation of the Russian Revolution was a powerful factor in persuading the POS to join the Third International. Secondly, the prestige and influence of Recabarren was a key factor in the decision. By 1920, Recabarren was not only the unchallenged leader of the POS but also the most prominent and respected working class leader in Chile. The Socialists who cared to challenge his decisions and recommendations openly were few and such was his stature in the working class movement as a whole that it is unlikely that any successful Communist Party could have been founded in Chile at that time had he opposed the idea. Finally, Recabarren and the POS leadership were careful to make the decision to join the Third International as easy as possible. Fulfilment of the 21 Conditions was to be deferred until circumstances permitted and so the change of the POS's name was not to be accompanied by any drastic changes in the way the party functioned or conducted its business.(115) Indeed, the decision to affiliate to the Third International was presented and seen as a gesture of sympathy for the Russian Revolution rather than a step which would fundamentally transform the nature of the party.

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- (114) For articles hostile to the Bolsheviks and the November Revolution (mainly reprinted from foreign newspapers) see DTIQ 21.10.1917; 10.11.1917; 13.12.1917.
- (115) La Comuna, Viña del Mar, 1.1.1921.

Whether or not the question of affiliation aroused strong opposition in some sectors of the POS, few signs of it are evident in the official published accounts of the Rancagua Party Congress.(116) There, in the presence of a Comintern delegate from the Argentine Communist Party, the POS unanimously approved a motion affiliating the party to the Third International. Although Hidalgo and others apparently opposed a further motion changing the POS's name (a change demanded by the 21 Conditions) this, too, was approved and on January 1st, 1922, the PCCh formally came into existence.(117)

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- (116) See, El Socialista, Antofagasta, 12.1.1922; 13.1.22.
(117) Ibid. 12.1.1922. Ramírez Necochea has alleged that Hidalgo was opposed to affiliation (Origen, pl87-8). Hidalgo, however, has denied this although he admitted that he did oppose the change of name. Article by Wilfredo Mayorga, Ercilla, Santiago, 21.4.1965.

Chapter 2 The Early Years, 1922-1927

In terms of national politics, the demise of the Parliamentary Republic and the re-emergence of the Armed Forces as the active arbiter of the nation's destiny were clearly the most striking developments which Chile experienced between 1922 and 1927. The military golpes of September 1924 and January 1925 brought the Armed Forces into politics in a way not seen since the early nineteenth century and initiated a process which culminated in four years of dictatorial rule after the election in 1927 of a serving Army officer, Colonel Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, to the Presidency of the Republic. Important though these events were for the fortunes of the PCCh, others had an equal impact on its development. The suicide of Recabarren in December 1924 left the PCCh without a dominant leader at a time of great political turbulence while, more important still, the closer interest which the Comintern began to display in the internal affairs of its Latin American affiliates in the mid-1920s brought changes which were to have lasting consequences for the PCCh.

While Recabarren lived, however, the PCCh's policies, tactics and organisational practices remained those of the POS, adopted with little change. Revolutionary rhetoric

continued to go hand-in-hand with reformist policies and actions and the PCCh's attitude towards the government of Alessandri and the September 1924 golpe which displaced it clearly demonstrated that the PCCh had not acquired a revolutionary strategy along with its new name.

Since Alessandri had come to power in 1920, he had been confronted by a hostile conservative majority in the Senate which used its powers to block his reform programme and to make government as difficult as possible. Even though Alessandri managed to arrange the election of a Congress which was nominally in his favour in March 1924, he had by that time so alienated some of his erstwhile supporters that the new Congress proved little more tractable than the old.(1) At various stages of their conflict both Alessandri and his opponents had approached the Armed Forces with the aim of persuading them to act in their respective favours. In the event, the younger and more junior officers, who provided the motor force for the September 5th golpe, acted on their own initiative and for their own conception of the national interest. They forced Congress to pass much of Alessandri's reform programme but they refused to become the docile tools of the President - who resigned his office and fled the country.(2)

(1) Frederick M. Nunn Chilean Politics 1920-1931 p52-53.
(2) Ibid. pp55-66.

The PCCh's attitude towards Alessandri and his opponents before September 1924 was no different from that of the POS. In 1920, after first presenting Recabarren as a protest candidate in the elections for the Electoral College, the POS decided to support Alessandri in the second stage of the presidential election. It had done so not out of any real belief in his merits but because his candidacy appeared to present at least some possibility for radical change while his opponent's presented none.(3) Furthermore, POS support for Alessandri offered a prospect of receiving the cooperation of the Alianza Liberal in the 1921 congressional elections in return.(4) Soon after Alessandri took up office he gave ample proof that, for all his populist rhetoric, he was little better disposed towards working class aspirations than his predecessors. The POS retreated into a position of hostile neutrality towards his government and its right-wing opponents, a position which the PCCh took over without change. Thus, the PCCh stood on the side-lines in the conflict between Alessandri and the Senate and while, at times, it appeared to veer towards supporting one side and then the other, it exhorted its supporters and the FOCh to remain aloof from bourgeois conflicts

(3) Article by EQUIS in El Socialista, Antofagasta, 14.8.1920, 'Barros ó Alessandri'.

(4) The POS rejected a formal pact with the Alianza Liberal at its 1920 National Congress - but both Victor Cruz and Recabarren had local agreements with Alianza Liberal parties in the March 1921 congressional elections. El Socialista, Antofagasta, 11.6.1920; 12.6.1920; 3.3.1921. DTIQ 16.1.1921.

and preserve the independence of the working class movement.(5)

The PCCh maintained this posture during the early days of the September golpe - although the party newspapers gave voice to a variety of emotions, ranging from hopes for revolutionary change to a deep foreboding that a military dictatorship was imminent.(6) However, when the military movement issued a manifesto on September 11th declaring that the Armed Forces would respect civil liberties, that they intended to 'abolish gangrened politics' and to call a Constituent Assembly to frame a new Constitution, the PCCh's attitude changed.(7) The intention to 'abolish gangrened politics' struck a responsive chord amongst broad sectors of Chileans and Recabarren, for his part, seems to have been particularly enthused by the prospects for radical change in general and for a Constituent Assembly in particular. Taking the military's slogan that the 'moment is of creation and not of reaction' Recabarren called on the PCCh and the FOCh to help the military to implement the promises they had made.(8) Recabarren and other leading Communists like Hidalgo and Luis Victor Cruz began to actively encourage support for the military movement and its goals by addressing public meetings in the company of army officers.(9) But caution was not thrown entirely to

(5) Federación Obrera 15.3.1923.

(6) See, for example, DTIQ 5.9.1924; Justicia 7.9.1924; La Defensa Obrera, Tocopilla (hereafter cited as DOT) 7.9.1924.

(7) Justicia 13.9.1924.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Ibid. 16.9.1924; 13.9.1924.

the winds; Recabarren only pledged the support of the workers in so far as the military redeemed their pledges and the party press expressed some doubts as to the military's ability and sincerity.(10) Further, criticisms of the military movement and the Junta de Gobierno (composed of senior officers), which had taken over after Alessandri's departure, were not slow in coming. By the end of September relations between the PCCh and the Junta had grown noticeably cooler and on October 29th the FOCh, by then completely under Communist control, issued a manifesto which accused the Junta of failing to keep its promises and of betraying the goals of the military movement.(11) The FOCh made an appeal to the younger idealistic officers to recover the control of the military movement from their more senior and conservative colleagues in the Junta de Gobierno - appeals which were cautiously repeated in the final months of 1924.(12)

Although the PCCh showed itself to be indecisive and lacking in a revolutionary strategy in the early 1920s, the choices before it were by no means easy. The PCCh's neutrality in the conflict between Alessandri and his opponents in the Senate stemmed from an understandable dislike and distrust of both sides and from a realistic appreciation of the PCCh's weakness and the strength of

(10) Ibid. 11.9.1924; 13.9.1924; 17.9.1924.

(11) Ibid. 31.10.1924.

(12) Ibid. 8.11.1924; DOT 16.12.1924.

Alessandri's popular appeal. Similarly, the caution which the PCCh showed towards the military movement is equally understandable given that movement's initial lack of definition and the role which the Armed Forces had played in the suppression of strikes and workers' organisations in the recent past. Even so, the suspicion remains that the PCCh was lacking in revolutionary resolve and consequence - although official PCCh historians have identified the early years of the party as being a period of 'revolutionary infantilism'.(13) The Communists did believe that revolution was both imminent and inevitable but they do not appear to have felt the need to take actions which would hasten the millenium. Thus, at various stages during the political crises of the early 1920s, the PCCh expressed its determination to avoid civil war at all costs while the FOCh, when approached by the PR to launch a general strike against the military in the early days after the September golpe, insisted on guarantees. First, it demanded a large sum of money to feed the strikers and, second, legitimacy - a strike call from Congress - before it would act.(14) From the beginning the PCCh appears to have been ruled by its hard-headed caution rather than its revolutionary romanticism.

If the PCCh did not immediately acquire a revolutionary strategy on its foundation, neither did it possess

(13) Ramírez Necochea Origen, pp255-278.

(14) Carlos Vicuña Fuentes La Tiranía en Chile, pp159-161.

the organisational structures and practices appropriate to a party intent on decisive revolutionary action. Until 1926, when the PCCh formally adopted the cell and democratic centralism as its organisational norms, the PCCh remained a rather loose association of sections, composed of eleven or more members who met periodically in open assemblies and sent delegates to a Junta Federal which co-ordinated party activities at the provincial level.(15) Maximum authority in the party was invested in the national party congress which delegated administrative powers to a Comité Ejecutivo Nacional(CEN), which did not attempt to apply a rigid military-like discipline to the other organisations but left the solution of thorny problems to the national congresses. Despite the absence of a strict hierarchical discipline, most sections did follow the lead given by the CEN - and, at this stage of its development, the party may have been helped rather than hindered by the absence of rigid discipline since it permitted the fairly peaceful coexistence of different currents of opinion until the national party congress was able to pronounce one way or another.

The PCCh not only mirrored the POS in its organisation but also in its overwhelming pre-occupation with electoral matters. After the process of converting the POS sections into PCCh organisations had been completed in 1922 - a process which, in general, was accomplished rapidly and with little resistance - the PCCh lapsed into a lethargy

(15) See Appendix A for an explanation of the cell and democratic centralism.

worthy of any Chilean party between elections. By the end of 1922, the CEN PCCh was complaining that it was unable to assemble the five members necessary to constitute a quorum and in January 1923, it excluded two of its members, who had been lax in attendance, to reduce the size of the quorum.(16) Even Recabarren, admittedly absent in Moscow attending the Fourth Comintern Congress between November 1922 and February 1923, did not become active in a local section until March 1923.

On Recabarren's return from Moscow - and with the approach of the March 1924 Congressional elections - there was an upsurge of party activity. Propaganda centres, composed of five or more members, began to proliferate and in Santiago and elsewhere Comités Centrales Administrativos(CCA) began to co-ordinate party activities in their respective areas. Indeed, by mid-1923, the CEN had found it necessary to restrict the powers of the sections to create new organisations such was the confusion caused by their rapid mushrooming and even quicker decline.(17) Nevertheless, the number of PCCh organisations increased rapidly during 1923. In July 1922 the PCCh had claimed 16 sections spread throughout the country but in December 1923 it claimed 70.(18) However, by September 1924, this figure had fallen to 58 and of these only 38 were considered active.(19) Although the increase in the number of sections would appear to indicate a significant growth of party membership during

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- (16) El Comunista, Antofagasta, 18.2.1923.
(17) Federación Obrera 10.7.1923.
(18) Ibid. 21.7.1922; 31.12.1923.
(19) Justicia 30.9.1924.

1923, Comintern statistics suggest that PCCh membership remained around 2,000 between 1922 and 1924.(20)

While the majority of the PCCh sections tended to be pre-occupied with largely internal propagandising, with battles for sectional office and with electoral matters, some took a more active part in the working class problems of their areas. This was particularly true of the powerful provincial parties of Antofagasta and Iquique but some sections in Santiago also became active in renters' leagues and in supporting strikes. But on the whole, the accusations which the POS had often levelled against the PD - that it was an organisation which only showed signs of life at elections time - could have been made equally well against the PCCh during its early years.

One of the main reasons why the PCCh presented this appearance was that, for many Communists, the FOCh rather than the PCCh remained the central focus of their attentions and energies. Indeed, given the choice of attending important meetings of the PCCh and the FOCh, some Communists chose to attend the latter and some FOCh members elected to the CEN PCCh in 1924 were reluctant to take office, in part at least, because this would reduce the time which they could spend on trade union affairs.(21) Moreover, the PCCh consciously placed itself in a secondary

(20) Report of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (London, no date) p292. Report of the Fifth Congress of the Communist International (London, 1924) p269.

(21) Federación Obrera 17.12.1923; Justicia 17.10.1924.

position to the FOCh; members were advised to pay dues to the FOCh rather than the PCCh if payment to both was financially impossible;(22) the PCCh held its national congresses after those of the FOCh during the early 1920s and formally abandoned the elaboration of programmes of its immediate demands for those of the FOCh. Finally, at times of national crisis it was the FOCh rather than the PCCh which was chosen as the vehicle for Communist declarations and pronouncements. Indeed, although Recabarren had formally rejected the idea of forming a Labour Party, during its early years the PCCh appeared to be precisely that - the electoral and political arm of the country's most powerful trade union confederation.

While the PCCh appeared to be the tool of the FOCh, formally rejecting party control over the FOCh as inimical to the FOCh's role as the organiser of workers of varied beliefs, the reverse became increasingly closer to the truth. Although the PCCh did not introduce the fraction technique to concert the activities of its members in the FOCh until the later 1920s and though there was a complete divorce in terms of personnel between the JEF FOCh and the CEN PCCh until late 1923, the ascendancy of the Communists in the FOCh became increasingly marked after 1922.(23) Indeed, Recabarren, who occupied national office in neither organisation until late 1924, appears to have been able to control

(22) Justicia 15.12.1924.

(23) See Appendix A for an explanation of the fraction.

the overall conduct of both through personal contacts, through the columns of Federación Obrera and, after July 1922, through the presence of his compañera, Teresa Flores, on the JEF FOCh.

During 1922 and 1923, the hold of the Communists over the FOCh was strengthened by the largely negative process of a substantial decline in the FOCh's membership. Although the lack of reliable statistics makes the exact proportion of this decline difficult to gauge, it seems likely that the FOCh's membership fell from around 80,000 in December 1921 to between 20,000 and 30,000 in late 1922.(24) It seems probable that this decline levelled out at the very least during 1923; estimates of gross FOCh membership in December 1923 range from 30,000 to 60,000.(25) Published dues payments indicate a total dues-paying membership of some 11,000 in December 1923 - a figure which showed no improvement until December 1924 when 12,000 dues payments were recorded.(26) After the steep decline in 1922, then, FOCh membership does not appear to have shown signs of a revival until late 1924.

The reasons for the FOCh's decline were several. Widespread unemployment, governmental hostility and indifference, the desertion of the powerful railway unions in

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- (24) Jorge Barría Serón Movimientos 1910-1926 p141; Ramírez Necochea, Origen p93; Acción Directa, Santiago, December, 1922.
- (25) Jorge Barría Serón Movimientos 1910-1926 pp148-149; Federación Obrera, 3.1.1924.
- (26) monthly dues payments records show an average of 4,000 dues payers in early 1924 and 7,000 in mid-1924. Federación Obrera 1.1.1924; Justicia 22.8.24; 6.12.1924; 19.3.1925; 20.3.1925.

August 1922 and the withdrawal of non-communists, in particular anarchists and radical Democrats, as the Communists' grip on national and local FOCh organisations strengthened - all contributed to the decline.(27) The Communists themselves, however, tended to emphasise another factor. The Rancagua Convention had decided to reorganise the FOCh along industrial rather than craft lines, grouping the membership in Consejos Industriales based on the manufacturing, food processing, construction, transport or public services industries; where this was not possible Consejos de Oficios Varios were to be formed.(28) According to Federación Obrera, the reconstitution of the FOCh organisations caused much confusion and conflict which led to stagnation and decline.(29)

Despite the increasing ascendancy of the Communists in the FOCh, there was still considerable anarchist influence both in the FOCh and in the PCCh itself. This influence manifested itself in a repugnance towards electoral and coalition politics and, on occasion, gave rise to struggles between local FOCh and PCCh organisations in which the protagonists on both sides were Communists. Thus, for example, in Antofagasta in 1923, the local FOCh led the campaign against the leadership of the PCCh section which had joined a Provincial Civic Union together with Liberal Democrats,

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- (27) The rail unions left because they felt their interests were being neglected in favour of those of the coal and nitrate workers and later joined the ISR on their own account. Alan Angell Politics and the Labour Movement in Chile (London, 1971) p36.
- (28) Federación Obrera 9.4.1922.
- (29) Ibid. 17.3.1923.

Democrats and dissident Radicals in order to break the hold of the PR over the municipal council.(30) While the PCCh profited greatly from its close contacts with the FOCh, one of the disadvantages of the association - and its unstructured nature - was that conflicts in one organisation tended to spread to the other.

By mid-1922, the Junta Provincial(JP) of the FOCh in Santiago was showing signs of dissatisfaction with the work of the JEF FOCh, at that time dominated by its Socialist Secretary General, Carlos Alberto Martínez, and its Communist Treasurer, Hidalgo. The JP criticised the JEF for being lax in the performance of its duties, for proceeding arbitrarily in declaring four of its seats vacant and for refusing to dismiss two JEF FOCh employees.(31) The friction between the JP and the JEF increased when Hidalgo, standing as the Communist candidate in a congressional by-election in Santiago, was accused of making an electoral pact with the Conservative candidate, Tizzoni. Although Hidalgo denied the charge he was expelled from the Santiago section of the PCCh for a five-year period.(32) However, the two JEF employees, whom the JP had been trying to remove since the Rancagua Convention (possibly because they were not Communists) were accused of having worked openly on behalf of Tizzoni - an offence which so incensed one FOCh activist, Castor Vilarín, that he forcibly ejected

(30) El Comunista, Antofagasta, 23.3.1923; 4.4.1923; 15.4.1923; 25.4.1923; 26.4.1923; 16.9.1923.

(31) Federación Obrera 28.6.1922; 5.7.1922; 10.7.1922; 22.7.1922.

(32) Ibid. 24.7.1922. Hidalgo was readmitted to the PCCh in December 1923.

them from the JEF headquarters at pistol point. Vilarín was summarily expelled for this offence.(33) The two strands of the conflict came together at a FOCh provincial convention in Santiago where Vilarín and his allies launched a full-scale attack on Martínez and Hidalgo, attempting to prove that they had less right to sit on the JEF than the members they had excluded.(34) Although the attack failed and the JEF's decisions were upheld, in the elections held to fill the vacant seats one of the members who had been excluded from the JEF, Ernesto González, was re-elected with the second largest number of votes. More interestingly, the person who received most votes was Teresa Flores who duly took up her seat on the JEF.(35)

The appearance of Teresa Flores suggests that, in face of the attacks which some of his older colleagues were experiencing, Recabarren had decided to take a more active part in FOCh affairs. Indeed, in the light of later events - and the personalities involved - it seems likely that the incidents in Santiago in mid-1922 constituted the first round in a conflict between younger activists of anarchist leanings and the older generation of party leaders - a conflict which culminated in a full-scale assault on the leadership of Recabarren and his closest associates at the National Party Congress in Viña in September 1924.

(33) Ibid. 2.7.1922.

(34) Ibid. 3.8.1922; 4.8.1922; 5.8.1922; 8.8.1922; 9.8.1922.

(35) Ibid. 5.10.1922.

Although relations between the JP FOCh and the JEF continued to be strained after mid-1922, it was differences over electoral tactics and the PCCh's failure in the March 1924 congressional elections which occasioned the attack on the 'old guard' at the September 1924 Party Congress.(36) For those elections, Recabarren argued that the PCCh should be allowed to pact with any party since, as representatives of the bourgeoisie, they were all equally bad.(37) The National Party Congress, held in Chillán in December 1923, endorsed this policy with the proviso that pacts should have the approval of the CEN, which was enjoined 'not to lose sight of the morality of our programme or the concept of the class struggle'.(38) In the event, because of Alessandri's unscrupulous efforts to pack Congress with his own supporters, the PCCh failed to elect a single candidate although it polled its largest number of votes to date.(39) In an atmosphere of electoral defeat, not unlike that which prevailed in the PD prior to the emergence of the POS, the Viña Congress took place.(40)

The immediate object of the attacks of the younger, more left-wing activists at Viña was not Recabarren himself

- (36) For evidence of continuing tension between the JEF and JP Santiago, see Federación Obrera 25.1.1923; 25.9.1923; 24.8.1924.
- (37) Ibid. 1.6.1923.
- (38) DTIQ 13.2.1924.
- (39) See Ricardo Donoso op. cit. I, pp350-372 for an account of the 1924 elections. PCCh candidates polled some 13,000 votes compared to 5,000 in March 1921. Federación Obrera 7.3.1924; 14.3.1924. No official statistics exist for the 1924 elections but it seems likely that under 200,000 votes were cast.
- (40) See Justicia 30.9.1924 to 16.10.1924 for the official reports on the Viña Congress.

but Luis Victor Cruz, a close associate of Recabarren and his colleague in the legislature. In the 1924 elections, Cruz had stood as the Communist candidate in Valparaíso, had made a pact with the PR and, worse still, had been implicated in the use of purchased votes. Since the CEN had approved the pact and had been directly represented on Cruz's election committee, it was held to be doubly guilty.(41) After a long and heated debate, in which the vote on Cruz's punishment was taken nine times, Cruz was suspended for three years while others received sentences ranging from permanent expulsion to more limited periods of exclusion.(42) The Congress's leftist complexion was also reflected in resolutions which called on members not to have anything to do with bourgeois elements in or out of power and in a series of measures designed to prevent the PCCh's municipal councillors (some 20 were elected in April 1924) from falling into reformist errors.(43) Interestingly enough, the Congress appears to have accepted Recabarren's resolutions on the September military coup without opposition.

The major party problems apparently settled, Recabarren left for Santiago before the Congress's formal closure and before the elections for a new CEN had been held. Before he had left, however, Recabarren had approved seven candidates for the new CEN - but, in his absence,

(41) DOT 14.10.1924.

(42) Ibid. 9.10.1924.

(43) Ibid. 1.5.1924; Justicia 13.10.1924.

only three of the seven, one of whom was himself, were elected. The remaining four new CEN members included Ernesto González and others who had led or supported the attack on the 'old Guard'.(44) Recabarren reacted fiercely to the prospect of being outnumbered on the CEN: he refused to accept his own seat and embarked on a campaign to destroy the new CEN. In public circulars to the sections he claimed that the new CEN was composed of persons 'who lacked the experience and the capacity to face up to the responsibility of their office'.(45) More privately, he enumerated the individual failings of each member which ranged from idleness and a total lack of ability to being 'uncultured, ignorant and grossly petulant'.(46) Recabarren specifically rejected their claims that they were young left-wing idealists and declared that this youthful group had contributed nothing to the party, that their left-wing ideals were non-existent and that all they had was a profane desire for personal power.(47) For their part, the Viña rebels attacked Recabarren for delusions of grandeur and re-iterated their determination to defeat the 'old guard' which had been responsible for the party's electoral failure; they would not rest until the 'pactist conventionalism' of the party bureaucracy had been swept away.(48)

(44) Justicia 3.10.1924; 4.10.1924.
(45) Ibid. 6.10.1924.
(46) Ibid. 7.10.1924.
(47) Ibid. 15.10.1924.
(48) Ibid. 17.10.1924.

The passionate exchanges between Recabarren and the Viña insurgents in the party press came to an end in mid-October 1924 and, a little later, the old CEN elected at Chillán called for fresh elections to be held in the sections throughout the country to select a new CEN.(49) These elections were held on November 30th and members were asked to select from a list of some thirty candidates, vetted by the Santiago section to ensure that, unlike some of those elected at Viña, they met the seniority requirements laid down by party regulations.(50) By that time, too, the Santiago section had suspended or expelled some 30 members who were deemed to be responsible for the recent conflict.(51) The new CEN formally announced at the end of December included four members who had been militants in the old POS since 1912 or 1913; Recabarren himself was also re-elected.(52) By the end of the year, then, the triumph of Recabarren and the 'old guard' was complete.

Ramírez Necochea has suggested that the Viña insurgents were 'inspired' by Hidalgo and that the CEN elected at Viña was dominated by his adherents.(53) However, while Hidalgo had been - and would continue to be - the stormy petrel of Chilean Communism, the Viña rebels

(49) Ibid. 24.10.1924.

(50) See DTIQ 21.11.1924 for this list of candidates.

(51) Justicia 2.12.1924. Many of those disciplined had already withdrawn from the party in protest against Recabarren's activities; ibid. 4.11.1924.

(52) Ibid. 31.12.1924. The new CEN included Galvarino Gil, Lino Paniagua, Carlos A. Sepúlveda, Tomás Conelli, L.E. Guzmán, Recabarren, Roberto Salinas, S. Barra Woll. Guzmán, Conelli and Barra Woll had joined the POS in 1912; Gil in 1913. DTIQ 21.11.24.

(53) Ramírez Necochea Origen pp195-199.

almost certainly did not draw any political inspiration from him at this point although, later, it is true that some became prominent Trotskyists with Hidalgo. After all, Hidalgo's habitual failing appears to have been a propensity for 'collaborationism' with bourgeois groups and parties and if the Viña rebels stood for anything at all it was as opponents of such behaviour. Moreover, apart from an aside in Lafertte's autobiography, there is little direct evidence to suggest that Recabarren's relations with Hidalgo were anything but harmonious.(54) They had apparently worked together well enough on Federación Obrera in the early 1920s and Recabarren appears not to have objected when Hidalgo petitioned for re-admission to the PCCh in December 1923.(55) Thus, while Hidalgo and Recabarren certainly had their differences - over the change of the POS's name, for example - there is no evidence to suggest a bitter clash of personalities. Recabarren himself had no doubts whatsoever as to the architect of the assault upon his leadership; he named Castor Vilarín.(56) Vilarín publicly admitted his guilt in a scathing letter in which he indicted 'the bureaucrats, the writing-desk activists and those who believe that thirty years of struggle concede infallibility' and terminated with an appeal to 'Santa Teresa de las Flores' to intercede on his behalf before the 'Tsar of the PCCh'.(57) It may be remembered that Vilarín, not one to be

(54) Elías Lafertte Vida de un comunista (Santiago, 1957) pl59.

(55) Federación Obrera 4.1.1924.

(56) Justicia 17.10.1924.

(57) Ibid.

parsimonious in his attacks on those in authority in the PCCh and the FOCh, had delivered vigorous attacks on Hidalgo in 1922. Thus, while it is not possible to dismiss Ramírez Necochea's suggestion out of hand, it seems likely that in this particular case, Hidalgo was not the villain of the piece.

Although Recabarren was clearly winning his struggle against the Viña insurgents by mid-December 1924, on December 19th, at approximately 7 a.m., he committed suicide with an automatic pistol which he had bought on his recent travels in Russia. The event caused consternation and dismay inside the PCCh and the FOCh and such was Recabarren's stature that almost all political parties and national newspapers publicly regretted his passing. Inside the Chilean working class movement, the circumstances of his death and, in particular, the several bullet wounds in his head and body gave rise to the rumour that he had been murdered - a rumour which, according to Lafertte, the PR urged the PCCh to encourage as a prelude to launching a general insurrection against the military Junta de Gobierno. (58) The PCCh and the FOCh, however, had no stomach for such an adventure and set about calming the fears and disquiet which Recabarren's death had caused by creating a joint commission to report on his suicide. In the published abbreviated version of this re-

(58) Elías Lafertte op. cit. pp165-166. Juan Chacón, however, has claimed that the idea came from young officers who promised to back the insurrection with their troops. José Miguel Varas Chacón (Santiago, 1968) pp51.52.

port, it was established that Recabarren had been suffering from a progressive neurological complaint, the symptoms of which were excruciating pains in the head and eyes - pains which had made him increasingly irascible in the final months of his life.(59) It was also established that Recabarren had told his closest associates that he would end his life when he felt that his mental powers were failing him and, indeed, that he had made a previous suicide attempt on August 30th, 1924.(60) If this was the case, the suggestions made by various commentators that he was dismayed and disillusioned by the workers' reaction to the military golpe and driven to desperation by his opponents inside the party appear to have little to do with his death.(61) His illness and the imminent break-up of his relationship with Teresa Flores (62) appear to have been the basic reasons for his suicide - although he probably was affected by the additional physical and mental strain of the burden of national events and party affairs during the last months of his life.

The death of Recabarren marked the end of an era for the PCCh. In the months which followed, events were to thrust the PCCh more firmly into the mainstream of Chilean political life and the party's increasingly close contacts with the Comintern were to produce changes which substantially altered the PCCh's character. It is by no means

(59) DTIQ 22.1.1925.

(60) Ibid.

(61) James O. Morris Los elites, los intelectuales y el consenso n205, lists some of these suggestions.

(62) Interview with J. de la C. Leyton, Santiago, March 1973.

certain that Recabarren would have survived either set of experiences with his standing and reputation in the Chilean working class movement unimpaired.

By the end of 1924, it had become clear to the younger and more progressively-minded officers who had provided the impetus for the September 1924 golpe that the Junta de Gobierno was no longer worthy of their confidence. Not only was the Junta failing to take steps to implement the declared goals of the military movement but it seemed to be preparing to hand over power to precisely those elements whose bitter opposition to Alessandri's reform programme had helped to create the conditions which precipitated the September golpe. On January 23rd, the young officers, led by Colonels Carlos Ibáñez and Marmaduque Grove and urged on by civilian alessandristas, deposed the Junta de Gobierno, reaffirmed their commitments to constitutional reform and national regeneration and invited Alessandri to return to Chile and complete his term of office. (63)

Although Alessandri's arrival in Santiago in March 1925 ostensibly marked Chile's return to civilian rule and constitutional normality, the reality was somewhat different. The 1833 Constitution was in abeyance, Congress was closed

(63) For the developments leading up to the January 1925 coup see, Carlos Charlin Del Avión rojo a la República Socialista (Santiago, 1972) pp50-69; Frederick Nunn op. cit., pp67-87; Carlos M. Sáez Recuerdos de un Soldado (Santiago, 1933-34; 3 vols.) I, Chapter 7.

and civil liberties rested on the tender mercies of the military. Similarly, as Alessandri himself recognised on more than one occasion, his ability to govern rested on his loyalty to the declared goals of the military movement.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Moreover, although Alessandri had insisted that the military went back to their traditional duties and preoccupations as the pre-condition of his own return, he soon found that he had need of military support to overcome the resistance of those who opposed his constitutional reforms. Finally, in the months after Alessandri's return, another factor making for the continued involvement of the military in politics emerged - the presidential ambitions of Colonel Ibáñez, the principal spokesman and leader of the young officers.

Alessandri's overwhelming concern in the months which remained of his period of office was to frame and promulgate a new constitution which would end the abuses of the Parliamentary Republic once and for all. When this task had been completed he no longer felt obliged to tolerate the increasingly assertive military intervention in his conduct of the government. In September 1925, when Colonel Ibáñez, who held a cabinet seat as Minister of War, allowed his name to go forward as a presidential candidate in the forthcoming presidential elections and refused to resign from cabinet as convention demanded, Alessandri handed over

(64) See, for example, Arturo Alessandri Recuerdos de Gobierno (Santiago, 1967; 3 vols.) II, pl68.

power to his old rival, Barros Borgoño, and resigned once again.(65) Ibáñez was eventually forced to drop his presidential candidacy in the face of opposition from the Navy and disgruntlement amongst some sectors of the Army.(66) However, there is evidence which suggests that he continued to intrigue to become president even though he had been forced to withdraw his candidacy. He insisted that the political parties should choose a single candidate for the October 1925 presidential elections, apparently in the hope that they would fail and that he could press his own candidacy, once more, in the name of national unity. When this strategem failed and the political parties did manage to agree on a single candidate - Emiliano Figueroa Larraín, an eminently respectable if totally unimpressive product of traditional politics - Ibáñez tried another. He encouraged the presidential ambitions of José Santos Salas, a military doctor and a personal friend who as a reforming Minister of Health earlier in the year had won considerable popularity. In doing this, Ibáñez apparently hoped that Santos Salas, who promised sweeping reforms and who was supported by the PCCh and by an ad hoc conglomeration of blue and white collar organisations (which later formed the Unión Social Republicano de Asalariados de Chile - USRACH), would be seen by the Armed Forces and the established parties as a powerful red menace which Figueroa Larraín would be incapable of

(65) See, ibíd. II, pp263-282 for Alessandri's account of his resignation.

(66) Carlos A. Sáez, op. cit., II, pp29-31.

stopping.(67) Ibáñez felt that this would revive his own presidential chances as a transaction candidate but, once again, Ibáñez miscalculated and both Figueroa Larraín and Santos Salas went to the polls. Although Santos Salas received a remarkable 74,091 votes, Figueroa Larraín romped home with 186,187.(68)

Figueroa Larraín took office as President of the Republic in December 1925 but from the first was at the mercy of Ibáñez who remained in the cabinet as Minister of War. Ibáñez blocked the appointment of ministers of whom he did not approve and took it upon himself to instruct Ministers of the Interior in their duties. At the same time, he continued to consolidate his personal support in the Army and worked to undermine the authority of the naval chiefs who had blocked his presidential candidacy in October 1925.(69) By the beginning of 1927, Ibáñez was ready to act. He forced the resignation of the Minister of the Interior and arranged his own appointment to that office. From that position, in early February 1927, he launched the first of many waves of persecution against his political opponents. In April 1927, Figueroa Larraín resigned, disgusted at last by the political persecution which had touched

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- (67) Carlos Vicuña op. cit., II, pp80-85 makes out a case along these lines and Carlos Sáez op. cit., II, pp33-36 tends to agree with him. Ibáñez himself claimed that his actions were dictated by circumstances and not ambition: Luis Correa Prieto El Presidente Ibáñez (Santiago, 1926) pp112-120. But Ibáñez's claims to patriotic disinterest are not altogether convincing. Probably, as Numa has suggested, Ibáñez simply did not know what to do in October 1925; op. cit., p105.
- (68) Julio César Jobet, El Partido Socialista de Chile (Santiago, 1971; 2 vols.) I, pp28-29.
- (69) Carlos L. Sáez op. cit., II, pp43-47; Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, op. cit., II, pp36-90.

his family and intimates, and handed over to Ibáñez as Vice President. The following month Ibáñez organised his own election to the Presidency, polling an unsurprising 98% of the votes cast.(70) The remaining 2% were shared between a handful of candidates, among them one Communist, Elías Lafertte, who by that time was already a detainee on the Island of Más Afuera.(71)

Although as late as January 16th, 1925, one CEN member had been urging the workers to stand aloof from bourgeois conflicts, the CEN greeted the January 23rd coup with almost unqualified enthusiasm.(72) The different initial reactions of the CEN to the second golpe, in part at least, may have been the result of the emergence of Hidalgo as the PCCh's most prominent leader after the death of Recabarren. However, since the CEN was still dominated by recabarrenistas and since the party had been urging the young officers to recover control of their movement while Recabarren had been alive, it is by no means certain that the CEN would have responded differently had he survived. Indeed, while Hidalgo did become the PCCh's most prominent public figure, the CEN later claimed that he had always acted on their directions.(73) In any event, once the

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- (70) According to La Nación, Santiago, 23.5.1927, Ibáñez polled 222,139 votes to his opponents' 8,072. 302,142 people were eligible to vote.
- (71) Lafertte received some 2,000 votes nationally but only 593 from the Communist strongholds of Tarapacá, Antofagasta and Concepción. Ibid.
- (72) Justicia 16.1.1925. Article by Salvador Barra Woll; ibid. 25.1.1925: CEN and FOCh Manifesto.
- (73) DTI 14.1.1926. CEN report for 1925.

young officers had acted, the CEN POCh and the JEF FOCh promptly pledged its support and even offered to share in government - an offer which shocked some sectors of the party but which was justified by the CEN on the grounds that this would be the best way to ensure that the military redeemed its pledges.(74) The widespread consternation which the CEN's action apparently caused inside the party soon moved it to emphasise that its support for the military was a temporary expedient, conditional upon the military's performance.(75) Moreover, in the weeks which followed, the CEN produced an increasingly sophisticated and persuasive justification for its position - and in doing so, went some way towards evolving a revolutionary strategy.

According to the CEN, cooperation with the military brought both short and long term benefits. In the short term, by supporting the golpe, the PCCh had helped to abort the threat of a handover to right-wing reaction which the old Junta de Gobierno had been planning and, at the same time, had hastened Chile's return to civilian rule and the convocation of a Constituent Assembly to prepare a new constitution. In the longer term, the CEN argued that, given the battle now being waged between the bourgeoisie and the oligarchy, to attack both combatants and to call for immediate revolution would only serve to unite both in a crusade against the working class movement. In these

(74) Justicia 25.1.1925.

(75) Ibid. 27.1.1925.

circumstances, the PCCh's best tactics were to support a flank of the bourgeoisie thus maintaining close contacts with the masses who were still under bourgeois influence. When these masses had learnt the emptiness of bourgeois reforms and promises, as inevitably they would, the PCCh would be well-placed to harness their disillusion and utilise it in the development of the revolutionary struggles. Finally, by maintaining close links with the military, the party would improve its strategic position in the event of civil war and increase the possibilities of providing a revolutionary outcome to such a struggle.(76)

The PCCh appears to have clung fairly persistently to this strategy during most of 1925, even though it soon began to criticise the military movement and, after his return, President Alessandri. Two days after the coup, the PCCh helped to create a Comité Obrero Nacional(CON) in Santiago, which was presided over by Hidalgo, and later, similar committees were set up elsewhere in the country.(77) The CON, which included the representatives of a wide range of workers' organisations, was especially created to popularise the aims of the military movement but it was by no means the unconditional tool of the military since it maintained a constant pressure for the implementation of those aims.(78)

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- (76) These arguments can be found in Justicia, 27.1.1925; 29.1.1925; 3.2.1925. The fullest and most coherent explanation of the CEN's reasons can be found in Bandera Roja (Santiago) Year I, No.1, April 1925.
- (77) Justicia 27.1.1925.
- (78) Ibid. 29.1.1925; 12.2.1925.

However, in early February 1925, the PCCh withdrew its official delegate from the CON in an attempt to block the admission of other political parties to the committee, leaving the exercise of Communist influence in the hands of the FOCh representatives.(79)

In April 1925, the PCCh, in pursuance of its strategy briefly joined a rather curious coalition of Democrats and arch-conservatives in the Frente Social Republicano(FSR).(80) The FSR had been created to oppose the Frente Único Civil(FUC). The FUC was formed by Radicals and Conservatives ostensibly to defend civilian rule but was, in effect, an expression of opposition to both Alessandri and the military movement.

Although by May 1925 the PCCh had begun to express considerable disillusion both with the military movement and the Alessandri government and had begun to call for a united front of all wage-earners in preparation for the elections scheduled for later in the year, it continued to maintain a posture of de facto support for the administration and to maintain close links with certain elements in the military movement - even though its confidence in both received some rude shocks in June and July of 1925.(81)

One of the main reasons why the PCCh had supported the January coup was the promise of an elected Constituent Assembly which would prepare a new constitution. Indeed,

(79) Ibid. 9.2.1925.

(80) Ibid. 26.4.1925; Carlos Charlin op. cit. pp114-115.

(81) See Justicia, 5.4.1925; 7.4.1925; 16.4.1925; 17.5.25 for early criticisms of Alessandri and the military.

before Alessandri had returned to Chile the PCCh had called a constituent assembly of its own, the Constituyente Chica, in which a wide range of workers' organisations debated the type of constitution they would like to see.(82) However, the elected Constituent Assembly promised by the military did not materialise - Alessandri successfully arguing that time was too short and that the country should be returned to constitutional normality as soon as possible. Instead, Alessandri appointed a consultative commission which came to have 121 members - including seven 'communists' - but ensured that the real work of framing the constitution was done by a small sub-committee of 15 members, one of whom was Hidalgo.(83) Although the PCCh claimed that it had influenced the resolutions of the Constituyente Chica despite having been in a minority, it had little or no influence over the new constitution which the Consultative Commission finally approved in July 1925. This constitution, which was approved under ill-disguised military pressure, considerably strengthened the Presidency in relation to the legislature; it removed from Congress the power to remove ministers by votes of censure, to delay the passage of finance bills and to control the presence of troops in Santiago. It also separated Church from State, instituted direct elections to the Presidency, extended the periods of office of both the Executive and the Legislature and incorporated some rather

(82) See ibid., 13th-17th March, 1925 for reports on the proceedings of the Constituyente Chica.

(83) According to Donoso op. cit., I, pp417-418; pp422-423, seven of the delegates were classified as 'communists' - only four, however, can be definitely identified as PCCh members at that time - Cruz, Hidalgo, Contreras Labarca and Córdoba.

vague social principles.(84)

The PCCh objected vehemently to the 'presidential Caesarism' enshrined in the new constitution and ordered its supporters to vote for the retention of the old parliamentary system in the national plebiscite held to ratify the new constitution.(85) Although other political groups shared the PCCh's objections, the new constitution was approved by 127,509 votes to 6,825.(86)

Even as the Consultative Commission was meeting, an event occurred in the North which, under other circumstances, might have caused the PCCh to revise its strategy. In June 1925, nitrate workers in Tarapacá and Antofagasta went on strike. Although the reasons for the strike were primarily economic, friction between the workers and the military administrations of the provinces, which had been preparing for a plebiscite on the Tacna/Arica problem, provided an explosive element to the dispute.(87) The strike, which was accompanied by the usual isolated acts of violence towards the managers of the nitrate companies' truck stores and the company police, was dubbed a revolutionary attempt by the authorities and, with Alessandri's blessing, Colonel Ibáñez - the Minister of War - ordered the troops to restore public order. Estimates of those killed

(84) See Federico Gil El sistema político de Chile(Santiago 1969) pp105-8 for a summary of the 1925 Constitution.

(85) Justicia 7.8.1925.

(86) Ibid. 3.9.1925.

(87) Ibid. 19.6.1925. See also, Carlos Vicuña Fuentes op. cit., II, pp38-50. The plebiscite to decide whether Tacna and Arica (seized by Chile in the War of the Pacific) should be returned to Peru, was never held. In 1929, it was agreed that Tacna should revert to Peru and Chile should keep Arica. See Luis Galdames Estudio de la Historia de Chile (8th ed., Santiago, 1938) pp504-506.

in the bloodbath which followed range from under one hundred to three thousand and the occasion was used to launch a full-scale offensive against the PCCh and FOCh organisations in the area.(88) PCCh and FOCh property was seized and destroyed and Communist activists were arrested and deported.(89)

Despite the massacre of June 1925, the PCCh did not revise its strategy. Why it did not do so is not completely clear but it seems probable that the CEN based in Santiago felt it could do little more than lodge a formal protest against the killings and, indeed, it argued later that its passive response had saved the party from even greater persecution and had enabled it to work for the release of detained labour leaders.(90) However, perhaps the main reason for the CEN's determination to continue with the strategy it had evolved earlier in the year can be found in the approach of the elections scheduled for October and November 1925. For those elections, the PCCh evidently hoped to maintain links with the military movement and profit from the widespread popularity which the movement still enjoyed. Indeed, at that stage, the military were still considered to be amongst the fuerzas vivas of the nation, intent on shaking off the dead-hand of the Oligarchy. Certainly, the PCCh's relations with the military and, in particular, with Ibáñez (whose part in the June massacre, Justicia had sedately described as a 'gross error') grew

(88) James O. Morris op. cit. p209. Even Communist estimates varied from 2,000 to a few hundred.
Justicia 15.8.1925; DTIQ 14.1.1926.
(89) Justicia 19.6.1925; 10.7.1925.
(90) DTIQ 14.1.1926.

warmer in late 1925.(91) Indeed, the PCCh applauded Ibáñez's determination not to comply with the convention which demanded that cabinet ministers resign when they became presidential candidates and when, after the October presidential elections, Ibáñez offered his resignation to Vice-President Barros Borgoño Justicia waxed lyrical in his praise.(92) 'Ibáñez....energetic, spiritual, just and trusting...has been the one man who has known best what the country needs at this moment. He has been the only one who, with flaming sword in his right hand, has protected the national treasury from the rodents and the Holy Altar of our liberties against the despots.'(93) If Justicia was making payment to Ibáñez for his refusal to use force to crush a general strike which the PCCh, FOCh and USRACH had declared to protest alleged irregularities in the presidential elections or if it was playing to the gallery in preparation for the November congressional elections, the PCCh was well rewarded. In those elections, the PCCh, with the help of a pact with the PD and the USRACH, elected one senator and six deputies - and in the following year in by-elections elected a further representative to each chamber.(94)

(91) Justicia 27.8.1925; editorial.

(92) Ibid. 2.10.1925.

(93) Ibid. 31.10.1925.

(94) Manuel Hidalgo (senator); José Santos Córdoba, Pedro Reyes, Salvador Barra Woll, Ramón Sepúlveda Leal, Luis Victor Cruz, Manuel Bart Herrera, Abraham Quevedo (deputies) were elected in 1925. However, although the PCCh originally claimed Bart, it soon transpired that he was not a party member but a FOChista and he later joined the PD. In 1926, Juan Luis Carmona was elected to the Senate and Carlos Contreras Labarca to the Chamber of Deputies.

The posture of support for the military movement began to change after the November 1925 elections. From the beginning of 1926, the PCCh became increasingly hostile towards the military and in April 1926 it delivered the first of many trenchant attacks upon Ibáñez.(95) By October 1926, the PCCh had moved into a position of full opposition and had declared that the country was threatened by the imminent danger of a military fascist dictatorship.(96) The PCCh called for the formation of a broad united front of workers' organisations to combat this threat. However, by that time, the PCCh had long lost the opportunity of creating such a front, largely because of its hostility towards an organisation which the party itself had helped to create - the USRACH. The USRACH had originally come into existence to support the presidential candidacy of José Santos Salas and had attracted the support of a wide range of blue and white collar workers' organisations. After the elections, however, some of the leading non-communist members of the USRACH, who included Carlos Alberto Martínez and Oscar Schnake (both to play important roles in the creation of the Partido Socialista de Chile(PS) in the 1930s) saw its potential as the basis for a new party of radical, even socialist, ideology. While the PCCh was not unwilling that the USRACH should continue to exist after the elections, suggesting that it became a permanent

(95) Justicia 12.4.1926.

(96) Ibid. 22.10.1926.

congress for the working class movement, it did not view the emergence of a new radical party, possessing considerable popular and working class support, with equanimity.(97)

The USRACH, the PCCh declared in late 1925, was just another petty bourgeois party intent on mystifying the masses. Not content with polemics, the PCCh went ahead with the creation of a united front organisation of its own, the Unión General de Obreros y Empleados, which was intended, in part, to undermine USRACH's working class support. By the end of 1926, the hostility between USRACH and the PCCh made the creation of a united front difficult, although the PCCh made some fresh, if half-hearted, approaches to the USRACH as the dangers of a military dictatorship appeared to increase. However, although the USRACH became increasingly critical of Ibáñez and the military movement, it seems to have retained some faith in their good intentions long after the PCCh had lost its own. Thus, the USRACH reaction to Ibáñez's attacks on parliament and politicians, which became marked after October 1926, was essentially ambivalent - in contrast to the PCCh which called for the defence of parliament and the formation of anti-fascist committees.(98)

Since important sectors of the PR and PD shared the USRACH's ambivalence, when Ibáñez made his first moves against his opponents in February 1927, the PCCh was isolated from its most likely allies.

(97) Ibid. 13.12.1925; 1.1.1926.

(98) Ibid. 23.10.1926; 18.11.1926; 23.11.1926; 3.2.1927; 12.2.1927; 13.2.1927.

If, by early 1927, the PCCh was isolated politically the FOCh was also in a weakened condition. During late 1924 and early 1925, the FOCh had experienced a considerable revival in its fortunes, partly the result of general improvements in the economy and partly, perhaps, because of the hopes for radical change stimulated by the military interventions. However, although some authorities claim that FOCh membership reached the 100,000 mark in 1925, by early 1926 only some 6,000 members were regularly paying dues.(99) The major cause of the rapid decline in FOCh's membership was the bloody events of June 1925 - events which smashed the powerful regional organisations in the North and dealt a savage blow to the FOCh as a whole. Recovery after that date was hampered by a resurgence of the country's economic difficulties and by the implementation of new social legislation designed to give trade unions a legal structure.(100) While the PCCh grudgingly accepted the new trade union laws, their uneven and unequal application caused considerable confusion and conflict.(101) Ironically enough, as the FOCh's strength declined, the PCCh made its first concerted effort to structure its relationship with the confederation. In December 1925, two JEF FOCh members were elected on to the CEN PCCh while in September 1926, the CEN, following the example of

(99) Julio César Jobet Ensayo Crítico, p172; Justicia 20.4.1926.

(100) See, James O. Morris op. cit. for a study of this legislation and its political background.

(101) Ibid. pp204-210.

the Uruguayan Communist Party, created a Comisión Central Sindical (CCS). (102) The CCS was designed to organise and direct party work in the unions and to co-ordinate the activities of similar commissions at the regional and local levels.

Although the FOCh's strength appears to have declined dramatically after June 1925, the general political effervescence produced by the military intervention had enabled the PCCh to extend its influence to other working class organisations. In early 1925, anarchist agitation, seconded by Communists, produced Ley 261 which created a series of tripartite commissions to control rents. (103) These commissions, which included representatives of workers' organisations, served as the basis for the revival of a traditional form of worker organisation - the Liga de Arrendatarios. Under the impetus of the new law, the renters' leagues came together to form a Liga Nacional de Arrendatarios (LNA) in which Communists came to play a prominent role. Other workers' organisations in which Communists became prominent during the mid-1920s included the Federación Obrera Ferrovaria, the Unión de Empleados de Chile (UECh) and the Asociación General de Profesores.

If the USRACH refused to join a united front with the PCCh and the FOCh grew increasingly weaker, the PCCh did manage to achieve a degree of cooperation with other workers' groups in late 1926. It launched a campaign with

(102) Justicia 28.9.1926.

(103) See, ibid. 5.2.1925 for an account of the events which produced Ley 261.

anarchist organisations against the social security law, Ley 4054, which, it was claimed, served to reduce wages and worked in favour of the employers.(104) In January 1927, the PCCh and its allies launched a general strike against the government's failure to solve the problems of the working classes. Neither movement, however, appears to have had much success - the January 1927 strike foundering under effective police action and the opposition of USRACH.(105)

While the death of Recabarren probably made little difference to PCCh policy in early 1925 and while there appear to have been no intense power struggles inside the national leadership as a result of his disappearance, the local organisations did become more forthcoming in their criticism of party policy. Varying degrees of opposition were expressed by the sections to the CEN's support for the January coup, to its participation in the FSR, to its failure to sufficiently condemn the June massacre, to its support for the Santos Salas presidential candidacy and to its electoral pact with the PD and USRACH. But despite this opposition, public criticism of the CEN remained a rare occurrence and the CEN was openly challenged only twice during 1925. The Antofagastan section vigorously attacked the CEN for supporting the 'bourgeois reformist' January military

(104) Justicia 10.11.1925.

(105) El Nacionalista, Valparaíso, 1st fortnight, Feb. 1927 for USRACH's position on the January strike.

movement while, later in the year, the Valdivian section claimed that the CEN's support for the military movement had resulted in the 'moral death' of the party and accused the national leadership of 'shameful bungling' - worse, in its view, than reformism and collaborationism.(106)

Despite the evidence of considerable discontent in the sections during 1925, the party showed no signs of serious fractionalisation. This was probably the result of a number of factors. Firstly, the public criticisms of the CEN were not accompanied by any attempt to bring it to immediate account. Secondly, the CEN itself adopted a conciliatory attitude towards dissidence in the party. Indeed, one of the first steps it took was to organise a poll of the sections to have the sanctions placed on Cruz and others at the Viña Congress, lifted; nor does it appear to have objected when, a little later, Vilarín and Ernesto González, the leading Viña insurgents, were re-admitted to the Santiago section.(107) Similarly, the CEN took no precipitate disciplinary measures against the Antofagastan and Valdivian sections but left the matter to be decided by the next national Party Congress, scheduled for December 1925.

But there may have been a more prosaic reason for the lack of fierce internal struggles during 1925. Once more, events and developments outside the party absorbed the energies of the membership. The January golpe had aroused

(106) La Jornada Comunista, Valdivia (JCV) 8.3.1925 reprinted the Antofagastan attack, see ibid. 18.9.25; 23.9.1925 for the Valdivian attack.
(107) Justicia 6.5.1925; 22.5.1925.

high hopes for radical change and the pronouncements of the CON and the FOCh attracted more attention than party circulars while laws like Ley 261 absorbed the interests of party activists. Such was the pull of events external to the party that in April 1925, the CCA in Santiago remarked that there was a 'complete lack of working spirit' in the area and claimed, a month later, that such was the state of dues' payments that the greater part of the membership was technically at the margin of the party.(108) For their part, after June 1925, the regional parties of the North were in complete disarray - indeed, some 15 sections ceased to exist because of the repression precipitated by the nitrate strike.(109)

Despite these difficulties, by December 1925, when the Seventh Party Congress met in Santiago, the total party membership had probably grown from 2,000 in 1924 to between 4,000 and 5,000, even though there were only 46 sections as compared with 87 sections in late 1924.(110) The reason for this growth was probably the PCCh's electoral successes in November 1925 - and, for this reason too, the Congress does not appear to have been the scene of bitter disputes and recriminations. However much some sectors of the party disapproved of the CEN's political line during 1925, its position had been vindicated by the election to parliament of the largest body of representatives the party

(108) Ibid. 12.4.1925; 7.5.1925.

(109) DTIQ 14.1.1926.

(110) Following early PCCh custom, national party congresses are numbered from the first POS congress (1915) throughout this work. See Ramírez Necochea, Origen, p265 and DTIQ 14.1.1926 for the figures on membership and sections.

had ever possessed.

After the study and muted criticism of the CEN's report for 1925, the Congress moved on to discuss the adoption of new organisational forms and practices - the cell and democratic centralism - to replace the old loose association of sections.(111) The CEN had recommended the study of these organisational forms, which had been formally adopted by the Comintern in July 1924, at the beginning of 1925.(112) In the event, the 1925 Congress did not make the adoption of new forms obligatory although some sections did begin to create cells in the early months of 1926. If the Congress did not insist on the new organisational forms, it did take other steps to tighten up the organisation. It raised the minimum requirements for party membership and increased the qualifications needed to become a member of the CEN or a delegate to a national Congress. The party was exhorted, once more, to purge itself of any anarchist elements which remained and it was decided to set up a central study institute to raise the political and ideological level of the membership. At the same time, steps were taken to further structure the party's relationship with its congressmen. They were instructed to pay their salaries into central party funds from which they would receive half back in wages. Party members were instructed to approach congressmen only through the CEN and the congressmen were told not to have any private dealings with bourgeois parties but to unmask

(111) See Appendix A, for the place of the cell and democratic centralism in the PCCh's organisation.

(112) DTIQ 30.1.1925.

them systematically in Congress.(113)

Despite the apparent absence of fierce controversy at the 1925 Party Congress, the scene was set there for serious conflicts which challenged the party's unity during 1926. With the election of several of the more prominent members of the older generation of party leaders to Congress, the CEN elected in December 1925 was dominated by younger activists who had no previous experience of serving on the CEN.(114) It was not long before the generational conflict which had embittered Recabarren's last months emerged with even greater vigour.

The first open challenge to the new CEN did not come from the congressmen but from the Santiago section and it came from the left rather than the right. In February 1926, the Santiago section refused to accept the expulsion of several of its members, ordered by the Party Congress, for refusing to support the congressional candidacy of Cruz in November 1925.(115) It also criticised the Party Congress for failing to discipline Hidalgo for allowing his name to be used in a telegram calling on Alessandri to return in early 1925 - even though the incident had been officially closed - and it criticised Justicia for carrying explanatory advertisements on a new social security law

(113) Justicia 3.1.1926; 5.1.1926.

(114) The CEN elected in December 1925 did include two of the 'older generation', Manuel Leiva (CEN POS and PCCh 1920-1923) and Lino Paniagua (CEN 1925) but these soon dropped out leaving effective power to Luis Hernández, J.R. Bascuñan Zurita, Maclovio Galdames, José Santos Zavala, Rufino Rosas.

(115) Justicia 23.2.1926.

(ley 4054) - a law to which the PCCh was opposed. Although CEN member Maclovio Galdames tried to defend the Party Congress's decisions, he was shouted down and in reprisal the CEN refused to publish news from the Santiago section and, in April 1926, ordered its dissolution. Fifty-nine members rejected this order, contacted other sections to justify their position, appealed to the South American Secretariat of the Comintern and began to publish their own newspaper, Rebelión.(116) Although the CEN did manage to organise a section of its own in Santiago, the Rebelión group continued to function until it was eventually re-absorbed into the party later in the year.

The second important conflict which the CEN had to face involved the whole question of its relationship with the party's elected representatives. Although the Seventh Party Congress had made some attempt to structure this relationship, congressmen still tended to go their own way and one congressman in particular distinguished himself by ignoring CEN instructions. Abraham Quevedo, deputy for Valdivia, not only failed to pay his salary into the central party treasury as the 1925 Congress had resolved but, in August 1926, he disobeyed an explicit CEN instruction to abstain on a censure motion designed to remove the Cabinet from office.(117) The CEN immediately suspended Quevedo for his indiscipline but he took the conflict back to

(116) Rebelión, Santiago, 1.5.1926.

(117) JCV 24.7.1926; Justicia 6.8.1926.

Valdivia where his adherents, who retained control over the PCCh newspaper, La Jornada Comunista, took the name of doctrinarios. The CEN, for its part, financed the activities of an anti-Quevedo faction in Valdivia which published its own newspaper - La Batalla.(118) The split in Valdivia persisted during most of 1926 and the doctrinarios claimed that they had the approval of both the Rebelión and the oficialista sections in Santiago.(119)

In part, at least, these conflicts were the product of the new CEN's determination to impose a more rigid discipline on the sections - a resolve in which they were encouraged by the closer interest which the Comintern was paying to the internal affairs of its Latin American affiliates. Although direct contact between the PCCh and the Comintern pre-dated the official foundation of the party, language differences, distance and lack of concern bedevilled the early years of the PCCh's relations with the Comintern.(120) Nevertheless, the PCCh did respond to

(118) La Batalla, Valdivia, was published fifteen times between August and October 1926.

(119) JCV 28.7.1926.

(120) The first direct contact appears to have been made in September 1921 when the Latin Countries' Bureau of the Comintern, acting on information received from the Argentine Communist, Rodolfo Ghioldi, sent a letter (in French) prematurely welcoming the PCCh into the fold; photocopy in Museo Recabarren. A CEN circular in Federación Obrera 15.8.1923 complains of the difficulties of finding trustworthy translators for communications from the Comintern which evidently often came written in German.

Comintern circulars calling for campaigns against the war, for the study of the new organisational forms and for financial assistance.(121) Moreover, Argentine Communists regularly attended Party Congresses as Comintern delegates and there is some evidence to suggest that the PCCh was in direct contact with the Comintern over the golpes of 1924 and 1925.(122) But although the Comintern set up a Secretariado Sud Americano(SSA) in Buenos Aires in September 1924 and appears to have approved the PCCh's general political line during 1925, at least to the extent of sending its warmest congratulations to the PCCh on its electoral success in November, the SSA did not become active in the PCCh's internal affairs until 1926.(123)

In 1926, the SSA undertook a campaign to 'bolshevise' the communist parties of the Southern Cone - to introduce new organisational forms and practices and to purge the parties of the worst of their reformist ideas, policies and leaders. The technique used in each case was the same; the SSA studied the party in question, published an open

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- (121) Federación Obrera 11.7.1924; DTIQ 7.9.1924. The Comintern evidently called for financial aid in 1923 and the PCCh began a campaign to that end in August. Federación Obrera 15.8.1923. It is unlikely that the PCCh raised much money - but it is interesting that whatever finance the PCCh later received from Moscow, the first flow of funds was in the opposite direction.
- (122) See, for example, an article by Jaime Fortuño in Justicia 26.11.1925 and the minutes of a CEN meeting in Ibid. 11.3.1925, which suggests this. Unfortunately, precisely what advice or comments the Comintern gave is not known.
- (123) Ibid. 8.12.1925.

letter detailing its strengths and weaknesses and suggesting future courses of action. The open letter was thrown open to full debate - a debate which was carried over to an amplified meeting of the national leadership which prepared resolutions for ratification in the national party congress. In mid-1926, the Uruguayan Communist Party underwent this process and the proceedings of its amplified central committee meeting, Comité Ejecutivo Ampliado(CEA), were published in Justicia, giving the PCCh a foretaste of what was in store and highlighting the most dramatic aspect of the whole procedure - the public criticism of old and respected party leaders.(124)

An SSA delegate arrived in Chile in September 1926 on a fact-finding mission and in November the SSA published its open letter on the PCCh.(125) The SSA found that while the PCCh was one of the most powerful and popular of the Latin American Communist Parties it had serious defects, ranging from the absence and malfunctioning of cells to the lack of links between the CEN and subordinate echelons in the party, from the low political level of the party - which facilitated personalist struggles - to the absence of systematic work amongst the peasantry, women, youth and trade unions. Although the SSA criticised the CEN for left deviationism on the grounds that it had failed to appreciate the need for a mass party, had neglected concrete political

(124) Ibid. 18.8.1926; 25.8.1926.
(125) Ibid. 29.11.1926; 30.11.1926.

work and had made errors in the application of the united front policy, it found that the CEN's general political line had been correct.(126) In the struggle between the CEN and the Congressmen, the SSA declared for the CEN and stated that the Congressmen's reformist proclivities were the greater danger to the development of the party. The SSA then proceeded to criticise three congressmen in particular for their reformist conceptions; these were Hidalgo, Quevedo and Ramón Sepúlveda Leal. Had Recabarren been alive and a congressmen, it is likely that he, too, would have been subjected to public criticism.(127)

The SSA's letter was thrown open to debate in Justicia and while some accepted the SSA's comments, others were angered by the public criticism of old party leaders and objected to the whole procedure of introducing bolshevisation through an open letter. One charge which the SSA made to the effect that the PCCh had been largely an electoral organisation to date aroused considerable anger, members pointing to the role the party had always played in the FOCh and the trade union movement. Finally, some contributors to the debate gave vent to anti-Argentine feeling and suggested that the SSA delegates, both members of the Argentine Communist Party, were hardly in a position to instruct the more successful PCCh as to its shortcomings.(128)

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- (126) For an explanation of the united front policy see below, Chapter 3, p125.
- (127) One of the SSA delegates to the CEA later indicated that, despite his undoubted merits, Recabarren had had his faults; he did not enumerate them. Justicia 5.1.1927.
- (128) Ibid. 11.12.1926 to 27.12.1926; 'Tribuna Libre'

The debate in the party press over, the CEA met in Santiago in late December 1926 with the attendance of the CEN members, a few congressmen, two SSA delegates and a scattering of provincial representatives.(129) Interestingly enough, the debates in the CEA did not centre around bolshevisation as such for all seemed to accept the need for the new organisational forms; similarly, nobody questioned the right of the SSA to intervene in the internal affairs of the PCCh, although some anti-Argentine feeling showed through again. Instead, the debates revolved around whether the PCCh had been mainly an electoral organisation in the past and the respective merits of the congressmen and the CEN in the struggles of the past year. Although the SSA had discerned a political perspective in the struggles, the sessions of the CEA revealed a yawning generational gulf and much wounded dignity and pride rather than any profound political and ideological differences. Most of the congressmen were prepared to admit that they had fallen into reformist errors in their speeches to Congress but they blamed their own lack of political education and the absence of timely and adequate direction from the CEN for their mistakes. Only Hidalgo, absent from the CEA until its final session, later defended some of his 'reformist' positions at the Party Congress and crossed ideological

(129) See, ibid. 4th-7th January, 1927 for the reports on the CEA. The two SSA delegates were evidently Rodolfo Ghioldi and Miguel Contreras - both Argentine Communists. Their pseudonyms were Vargas and Gómez. Lafertte op. cit. pp184-187.

swords with the SSA delegates.(130)

However, if the CEA revealed no deep ideological and political divisions, it did show the extremes of disarticulation and disorganisation which the conflict between the congressmen and the CEN had produced inside the party during 1926. According to the congressmen, the CEN had failed to respond to requests for directions as to the party's line on certain legislation, it had not followed through when congressmen made propaganda tours and it had unfairly singled out a few congressmen for criticism when all were guilty of similar offences. Furthermore, the congressmen denied that the CEN had played any useful part in the solution of the divisions in Santiago and Valdivia; the first they claimed had been solved by a comrade who had been passing through Santiago at the time while the second had been solved through the persistence of a SSA delegate.(131) For its part, the CEN accused the congressmen of making speeches without due preparation or respect for party doctrine, of sometimes taking a different position on the same problem in Congress and of refusing to obey instructions to make or return from propaganda tours.(132) Indeed, relations between the two groups had become so bad that in a senatorial by-election in the North in which Juan Luis Carmona had triumphed, Hidalgo had campaigned against Carmona's adoption as the Communist candidate while the CEN

(130) Justicia 12.1.1927.

(131) Ibid. 4.1.1927; 5.1.1927; 6.1.1927.

(132) Ibid. 4.1.1927; 8.1.1927.

had sent delegates to campaign against Hidalgo and for Carmona.(133)

Recriminations and counter-recriminations in the CEA gradually gave way to admissions from both the congressmen and the CEN that they had committed some errors. By the final session of the CEA both sides, encouraged by a small but significant group which had taken the middle course in the conflict between the CEN and the congressmen, had resolved to take steps to raise the ideological and political level of the party through the adoption of bolshevik norms.

On January 15th, 1927, the Eighth Party Congress met in Santiago and the debates followed the same lines as those in the CEA.(134) Perhaps the highlight of the Congress was the appearance of Hidalgo who came specifically to defend himself against the charge of treachery levelled against him by the CEN. The charge of treachery aroused protest from some delegates (like Salvador Ocampo) who were to fight bitterly against him in the 1930s and one of the SSA delegates, Gómez, found the charge both 'unjust and inadequate'. After delivering a spirited defence of his actions Hidalgo declared that he would resign if found guilty of treachery but the SSA representatives and the other delegates urged him to stay on.(135)

Throughout the whole proceedings of the CEA and

(133) Ibid. 8.1.1927.

(134) See, ibid. 8th-16th January, 1927 for reports on the Eighth National Party Congress.

(135) Ibid. 12.1.1927.

the Congress the SSA delegates had adopted a conciliatory manner and had tried to mediate between the congressmen and the CEN. Gómez described the conflict between the two groups as being the result of two unjust exaggerations; on the one hand, the exaggeration of the older party leaders who despised the CEN for its youthful inexperience and on the other, the exaggeration of the CEN which appeared to think that the party's history before 1926 was completely without significance.(136) Both SSA delegates insisted that the task of the CEA and the Congress was not to accuse and punish the guilty but to identify errors and correct them - and it was in that spirit that they had examined the speeches of the congressmen for reformist errors.(137)

By the end of its sessions, the Eighth Party Congress, its passions apparently spent, had approved a number of measures designed to improve the party's internal functioning. The cell and democratic centralism were formally adopted, the party press was placed more firmly under the control of the CEN - which now changed its name to the Comité Central(CC). While a number of disciplinary measures were dealt with, further steps were taken against only one of the three congressmen who had been singled out for criticism in the SSA's letter - Quevedo's suspension was converted into expulsion. The moderating and correctional influence of the SSA was given further expression in the

(136) Ibid.

(137) Ibid. 5.12.1926.

composition of the new CC. Expanded to nine members with five alternative members, the CC gave geographical representation to the party and contained a careful balance of 'old guard' members - including Sepúlveda Leal who had been one of the main targets of the CEN in the CEA and the Congress - and the 'new guard' - members who had served on the CEN during 1926. A third group, which included Carlos Contreras Labarca and Salvador Ocampo who had distinguished themselves in seconding the SSA delegates' mediating role, was also represented. The balance of factions was shown also in the creation of six interlocking sub-commissions of the CC.(138)

On this occasion at least, it would appear that the intervention of the SSA was almost entirely beneficial to the party and that far from creating friction, as one commentator has implied, it went some way towards resolving conflicts which were a serious challenge to party unity.(139) As one moderate member of the 'old guard', who had earlier expressed antagonism towards the Argentine SSA delegates, remarked 'only owing to the visit of the SSA delegation who came to show us the way the party should go, has the party's unity been saved'.(140)

The steps which the party took to improve and strengthen its organisation and political leadership in January 1927 had no opportunity to achieve the desired results.

(138) Ibid. 15.1.1927.

(139) Stephen Clissold Soviet Relations with Latin America 1918-1968 (London, 1970) p17.

(140) Justicia 17.12.1926; 9.1.1927.

Early in February 1927, the military fascist dictatorship of which the PCCh had given repeated warning in the preceding months appeared to become a reality. The purge which Ibáñez initiated of his political opponents fell very heavily on the national and local leadership of the PCCh and the FOCh. But despite the correctness of the PCCh's predictions it does not appear to have had much faith in its own prophecies. No steps were taken to set up an alternative leadership, no special techniques had been evolved for use in clandestinity - in short, the party was almost totally unprepared for the prolonged period of persecution and repression which ensued.

**Chapter 3. Clandestinity and Third Period
Policies, 1927-1934.**

For much of the first five years of its existence the PCCh had been allowed by government to function in relative freedom although, on occasion, it had been subjected to sharp persecution. During the same period, the Comintern's policies - and its neglect of its Latin American affiliates - had permitted the PCCh to maintain the general political line and the organisational practices it had inherited from the POS. However, the coming to power of Colonel Ibáñez in early 1927 forced the PCCh into clandestinity where it stayed until his fall in 1931. Meanwhile, in 1928 the Comintern undertook a sharp left turn in its policies and began to make greater efforts to ensure that all communist parties conformed to its political line and organisational norms. As a result of these pressures, the PCCh which emerged from clandestinity in 1931 was in a sorry condition, its membership dispersed and divided by schism and its influence in the trade union movement and in the electorate vastly reduced.

The PCCh emerged from clandestinity in July 1931 determined to implement Comintern policies, to capture the hegemony of the Chilean working class movement and deliver the final blows to the tottering capitalist system. However, while the political turbulence and social distress

generated by the impact of the Great Depression on Chile's economy may have seemed propitious for the rapid reconstitution of the PCCh and the development of the revolutionary struggle, the years immediately following Ibáñez's fall proved hardly less hostile to the party than those which it had experienced during his regime. The PCCh failed to achieve the ambitious goals of Comintern policy - indeed, it failed to make good the losses it had sustained between 1927 and 1931 - but nonetheless the PCCh survived and its survival was no mean achievement given the conditions of those years.

Although the PCCh had warned Chile of the imminent establishment of a 'military fascist dictatorship' in the latter part of 1926, it was woefully unprepared for the purge initiated by Ibáñez in February 1927 and for the prolonged period of clandestinity which followed. Occasional articles had been published in the party press on the organisation of clandestine activities but there was no alternative leadership and no special apparatus capable of directing the party's work in clandestinity. However, not all the party's difficulties stemmed from a lack of preparation. The Eighth Party Congress may have gone some way towards finding solutions for the conflicts which the PCCh had experienced during 1926 but the personal rancours and antagonisms which had fuelled those conflicts were not so easily settled. Moreover, military fascist dictatorship or not, Ibáñez's attack on a parliamentary system which was

generally recognised as corrupt and his appeals to the cause of national regeneration won him the sympathies of many Chileans, including workers. By April 1927, a combination of both of these factors had caused four of the nine PCCh congressmen to break party discipline and make their peace with Ibáñez, thus dealing a savage blow to the party's morale in the early months of clandestinity.(1)

In the longer run, the PCCh's work in clandestinity was made difficult by other factors. Firstly, a revival in the fortunes of the nitrate industry and a massive programme of public works initiated by Ibáñez, aided by loans from the USA, gave Chile a general prosperity in the late 1920s which tended to sap working class militancy. Secondly, Ibáñez's policies towards working class activists and organisations made the Party's work in clandestinity particularly difficult.

Although Ibáñez had his working class opponents arrested, jailed, tortured, banished to distant provinces, exiled and occasionally killed, he sought not to eradicate all working class organisations but to encourage those which gave him uncritical support and to cow and contain

(1) Abraham Quevedo, José Santos Córdoba, Pedro Reyes (deputies) and Juan Luis Carmona (senator) soon made their peace with Ibáñez. See, La Nación 9.3.1927; 2.4.1927. However, Quevedo and Santos Córdoba were already at the margin of the party - the latter was suspended for six months in December 1926 for failing to attend the CEA and the Eighth Party Congress.

those which did not.(2) Thus the persecutions which he initiated were not total either in time or scope and while prominent activists, like Elías Lafertte, spent the greater part of the Ibáñez years in detention or banishment, they were allowed some months of freedom - under close police surveillance - and given the opportunity to opt out of politics altogether by submitting pledges of good behaviour to the authorities.(3) In exchange for similar pledges, party congressmen were allowed to take up their seats in parliament; certain organisations in which the PCCh had played a prominent part were also allowed to survive - presumably under the same conditions. Thus, some FOCh organisations were allowed to function until August 1927, probably because JEF member Juan Briones pledged his support for Ibáñez, and the Liga Nacional de Arrendatarios appears to have survived until early 1928.(4)

Persecution, however, was only one side of the coin. The formation of legal unions along the lines laid down by legislation passed after the September golpe was

- (2) Few Communists of note appear to have been killed during the dictatorship. Ramírez Necochea cites only one by name - Casimiro Barrios, a Spaniard by birth who was active amongst white collar workers in Santiago. Origen p163. For a chilling, if undocumented, account of police methods under Ibáñez see Townsend y Onel La Inquisición Chilena 1925-1931 (Santiago, 1932)
- (3) Lafertte, who spent most of the years 1927-1931 in jail or banishment, was 'free' from July 1928 to February 1929 and from January to April 1930. See Elías Lafertte Vida de un Comunista pp188-226 for an account of his experiences under the dictatorship.
- (4) See La Nación 23.3.1927 for Briones's declaration of support for Ibáñez.

given some limited encouragement under Ibañez.(5)

Although this legislation was specifically designed to emasculate the trade union movement as a political force, it did afford PCCh and FOCh members some opportunity to continue their union activities - if in a limited and cautious way. Indeed, in the northern strongholds of the FOCh and the PCCh it was practically impossible to form a union without the participation of old members of both organisations and, according to one of its participants, the delegates to a regional congress of legal trade unions held in 1930 had all, at one time, belonged to the FOCh or the PCCh.(6) Furthermore, Ibañez encouraged the creation of new political associations especially designed to channel working class support for his regime. One such organisation, the Vanguardia Nacional de Obreros y Empleados (VNOE) was created in April 1927 by a group of ex-communists of some standing and pledged itself to 'cooperating fully in the labour of national construction and administrative purification undertaken by Carlos Ibañez'.(7) The VNOE disappeared shortly after the presidential elections of May 1927 and it was not until the approach of new congressional elections in 1930 that a new association, the Confederación Republicana de Acción Cívica(CRAC) was founded. The CRAC was supported by a wide range of workers'

(5) James O. Morris Los elites, los intelectuales y el consenso p210. The year after Ibañez's fall there were 421 legal unions with 55,000 members.

(6) La Opinión Iquique 27.1.1930; interview with Juan de la C. Leyton, Santiago 1972.

(7) La Nación 2.4.1927.

organisations, including the mutualist Congreso Social Obrero(CSO) and the white collar UECh as well as a large number of legal unions which were encouraged by the authorities to support the new organisation.(8) Indeed, the pressures placed on the legal unions to join CRAC meant that a few Communists appeared in its table of organisation - including Juan Leiva Tapia, later murdered at Ranquil.(9) After the CRAC had served its immediate purpose as a participant in the electoral arrangement which Ibáñez substituted for scheduled congressional elections, its public activities diminished sharply. Nevertheless, 14 CRAC representatives were appointed to the Congreso Termal - the name by which that particular Congress is known - and the CRAC lingered on, in name at least, even after Ibáñez's fall in July 1931.(10)

The great mass of the PCCh and the FOCh, subjected to the pressures of coercion and co-optation, confused by conflicting appeals to their loyalties and deprived of their local and national chains of command, accepted the change in

(8) La Nación 5.2.1930.

(9) See below pp143-145, for an account of the Ranquil uprising. Leiva Tapia, who was later revered as a martyr for the cause, appears as a member of CRAC's regional committee for Victoria. La Nación 18.1.1930.

(10) See La Nación 16.2.1930 for a list of CRAC congressmen. In the Congreso Termal, the PCCh only had one official representative, Hidalgo, who as a senator had three years of his term of office to run. However, two ex-Communist deputies, Quevedo and Sepúlveda Leal, were appointed as representatives of the PD.

circumstances which Ibáñez's accession to power signified and discontinued their political activities. Most, after all, had families whose survival depended on their capacity to earn wages and they could not afford to spend long periods in jail or risk banishment to distant provinces where the chances of getting employment were slight. A few, perhaps genuinely persuaded by the declared goals of the Ibáñez government or motivated by fear or by hopes of personal gain, gave the regime an active support. Others, resisting blandishment and persecution alike, determined to continue the struggle in clandestinity.

For those who had decided to struggle on, the difficulties were enormous. The waves of repression unleashed by the authorities, the constant police surveillance of suspected subversives, the pressures placed on detainees to denounce their active colleagues meant that the PCCh soon ceased to function as a national organisation. Between 1927 and 1930, four Central Committees, largely different in terms of personnel, were denounced to the authorities and arrested and the PCCh deteriorated into a series of small isolated groups often too cautious to maintain contacts with their closest neighbours let alone with the CC of the day.(11)

(11) See En defensa de la revolución: informes, tesis y documentos presentados al Congreso Nacional del PCCh (Santiago, March 1933) pp14-17. In future, this pamphlet, published by the schismatic PCCh led by Hidalgo, will be cited as En defensa.

In the atmosphere created by clandestinity, serious disagreements emerged inside the PCCh regarding the mechanics of the organisation of clandestine work, the attitude to be adopted towards Ibáñez's bourgeois opponents and whether the party should take advantage of the limited possibilities which existed for a legal opposition to the Ibáñez regime. According to official PCCh accounts, by the end of 1928 a tripartite division of opinion had become discernible amongst the leadership.(12) One group, led by Isias Iriarte - a member of the CEN of the POS and the PCCh from 1920 to 1923 and re-elected to the CC in December 1926 - argued for a completely isolationist position, rejecting involvement with other opposition groups and refusing to use such opportunities as existed for a legal opposition to Ibáñez. A second group, led by Hidalgo, argued that a completely illegal party was nothing more than a 'factory of martyrs' and advocated cooperation with other opposition groups and the creation of a legal opposition to Ibáñez. Finally, a third group which included Carlos Contreras Labarca and Galo González (13) rejected these left and right deviations (with the unerring wisdom proper to those who later emerged triumphant in the struggle for the control of the PCCh) and opted for a policy which called for the use of the local trade union structure as

(12) Lafertte op. cit. p208.

(13) See Appendix E for brief biographies of both Contreras Labarca and Galo González.

the principle vehicle for the struggle against Ibáñez.

Whatever the state of opinion inside the leadership towards the end of 1928, until 1930 the party's general conduct appears to have been most heavily influenced by Hidalgo's policies. In the winter of 1928 a clandestine group in Santiago managed to publish a newspaper, Alerta, which called for a middle and working class united front against Ibáñez and announced its intention to seek affiliation to the revolutionary committee based in Buenos Aires which was composed mainly of alessandristas and other bourgeois opponents of the dictatorship.(14) Moreover, in May 1929, after returning from exile Hidalgo took up his seat in the Senate with the permission of the CC - presumably after giving the authorities the appropriate undertakings - and towards the end of 1929 he was joined briefly by Luis Victor Cruz in the Chamber of Deputies.(15) Although official PCCh accounts claim that Hidalgo's performance in the Senate was already causing considerable dissatisfaction in the party by the end of 1929, no steps were taken against him until a year later when he was summarily expelled.(16)

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- (14) Alerta, Santiago 2.6.1928; no.3, August 1928.
- (15) Whatever the nature of Hidalgo's undertakings they did not prevent his re-arrest and further exile in 1930. Ercilla No.1561, 21st April, 1965. Article by Wilfredo Mayorga. Cruz sat in Congress during December 1929 and January 1930 but only spoke once to attack a government contract with the Chile Telephone Company. Boletines del Congreso, Diputados. Sesiones Extraordinarios 1929 Vol.11 p1830.
- (16) Manuel Hidalgo - colaborador profesional con la burguesía (Carta del CC del PCCh a los trabajadores que siguen a Hidalgo) Santiago, n.d. p54.

The expulsion of Hidalgo was probably delayed for a number of reasons, the most important being the arrest of two successive CCs during 1930 and the failure of the SSA to create a CC subservient to its wishes until late in that year.(17) Although the occasion of his expulsion was his failure to read a prepared CC statement on a new internal security law being considered in Congress in December 1930, it is clear that there were more profound factors at work. Hidalgo himself attributed his expulsion to his deteriorating relations with the SSA - never very cordial since the Eighth Party Congress. According to Hidalgo, his relations with the SSA worsened dramatically after May or June 1929 when he tried to persuade a visiting Comintern delegate that, since Chile was the more advanced country economically and since the PCCh was stronger than the Argentine Communist Party, the seat of the SSA should be shifted from Buenos Aires to Santiago.(18) Moreover, he argued that in the expected world capitalist offensive against the Soviet Union, which he thought would be launched from the USA, the countries of the Pacific would be of greater strategic importance than the Atlantic nations. Hidalgo claimed that the Comintern delegate was much impressed by these arguments and invited him to visit Moscow but

(17) The PCCh itself explained the delay in terms of its own political immaturity. Ibid.

(18) For Hidalgo's account of the reasons for his expulsion and the subsequent schism, see En defensa pp19-22 and Ercilla No.1561, 21st April, 1965, interview with Wilfredo Mayorga. See also R.J. Alexander Trotskyism in Latin America (Stanford, 1973) pp89-99.

that the SSA refused to give him the necessary permission because he was the public face of the party and too important to leave Chile for any length of time.(19)

According to Hidalgo, it was after this incident that the SSA embarked on a series of actions which he found unacceptable. In particular, the SSA by-passed the CC and entered into direct communication with the regional organisations, refused to give requested aid and advice and issued peremptory commands which the PCCh was in no position to carry out.(20) Matters came to a head in January 1930 when a delegate sent by the CC to the SSA to inform it on conditions in Chile, returned with powers to reorganise the party. In January 1930 an amplified CC meeting was held in Santiago and Hidalgo and his allies expelled the delegate and elected a new CC - which was unable to function because of the arrest of its members. In August 1930, another amplified CC meeting was held but it, too, was denounced to the authorities and its members arrested.(21) Shortly after that date, a new CC was created in Valparaíso under the auspices of the SSA and it was this CC which began to take disciplinary measures against Hidalgo and his associates in early 1931.(22)

The Valparaíso CC justified its expulsion of Hidalgo in terms of his ideological reformism and his

(19) Ercilla no.1560, interview with Mayorga.

(20) En defensa pp19-22.

(21) Ibid.

(22) This CC included Contreras Labarca, Juan Chacón, Galo González, Braulio León Peña and Luis Peña. Justicia 22.8.1931.

supposed collaborationism with the Ibáñez regime.(23)

While it was demonstrably true that Hidalgo continued to make reformist statements in Congress, despite the reprimands which he and others had received in the Eighth Party Congress, the charge of collaborationism was rather more difficult to substantiate. Hidalgo, after all, never suggested that the legal opposition which he advocated should replace clandestine activity - on the contrary he argued that legal activity should be parallel but secondary to illegal activity - a position perfectly consistent with standard Comintern practice which urged the combination of both legal and illegal methods where conditions permitted.(24)

Moreover, in as much as the CC gave its permission to Hidalgo to take up his Senate seat - a step in which the SSA apparently acquiesced, if only temporarily - both the CC and the SSA must bear some responsibility for Hidalgo's 'collaborationism'. Furthermore, leading members of the Valparaíso CC were not altogether innocent of similar 'crimes'. For much of the Ibáñez years, Carlos Contreras Labarca apparently abided by the police order which confined him to a relatively comfortable banishment in Santa Cruz, a provincial town in Aconcagua, where his wife was employed by the local courts.(25)

Similarly, José Bascuñan Zurita, a member of the 1926 CEN, leader of a group which opposed Hidalgo in clandestinity and, later, to become head of the PCCh's Peasant

(23) Ibid. 27.8.1931; 1.10.1931. For the fullest account of the PCCh's reasons for expelling Hidalgo see Manuel Hidalgo - colaborador profesional con la burguesía.

(24) En defensa p119.

(25) La Chispa, Santiago no. 2, August, 1931.

until his murder in 1935, petitioned the authorities for his release from jail in return for a promise to cease political activities.(26)

At the time it took place, neither Hidalgo nor the official PCCh made any direct reference to one set of factors which probably coloured Hidalgo's expulsion and which certainly determined the development of the schism which resulted from that event, namely the sharp leftward turn in the Comintern's policies. During the mid-1920s, Comintern policy, based on an analysis of world economic conditions which suggested that the capitalist system was enjoying a period of relative stability, advocated united front tactics as the means best suited to the development of the revolutionary struggle in the prevailing circumstances. United front tactics allowed the communist parties to cooperate with reformists, social democrats and other progressive forces in political and trade union activities. In the case of the PCCh, for example, united front tactics had permitted the party to make the electoral arrangement in 1925 which had resulted in the election of seven Communist congressmen. However, by 1927 a variety of factors, including changing economic conditions, the bloody failure of united front tactics in China and the imperatives of the Stalin/Trotsky struggle for power inside the Soviet Union, dictated a sharp change of tactics. This change was put into effect at the Sixth Comintern Congress.

(26) En defensa pp131-132.

which met in Moscow during July, August and September of 1928.(27)

The Sixth Comintern Congress announced that a third period of post-war economic development was commencing. It would be characterised by accelerating economic crises, the radicalisation of the masses, the sharpening of class conflict and a fresh series of imperialist wars leading to an armed assault on the USSR. In the coming crises, which it was felt would culminate in the final breakdown of the capitalist system, new policies were necessary. In particular, the communist parties had to prepare themselves for the approaching decisive struggles for power by purging themselves of their ideological and organisational weaknesses and by capturing the hegemony of their respective working class movements. Cooperation with social democrats and reformists was no longer possible, since in any revolutionary situation such groups would reveal their essential community of interest with the capitalist system. Indeed, every effort must be made to liquidate the influence which the 'left hand of the bourgeoisie' and the 'social fascists' exercised amongst the working classes. To achieve this objective, the communist parties were instructed to maintain positions of aggressive independence from other groups and implement 'united front from below' tactics. The 'united front from below' tactics entailed savage attacks on

(27) See, A.I. Sobolev et al. Outline History of the Communist International (Moscow, 1971) pp272-289 for the broad lines of the resolution adopted by the Sixth Comintern Congress.

communist leaders and determined actions to convince their working class supporters that their immediate interests were best served by association with the communist parties and with the revolutionary trade union movement. Integral to these third period tactics was the use of the strike weapon which would not only educate the masses in the revolutionary struggle and show them which groups fought hardest in their interest but also help to precipitate the final collapse of the capitalist system.

Another important event at the Sixth Comintern Congress was the promulgation of the Programme of the Comintern.(28) The Programme of the Comintern was an attempt to systematise and classify the nature and tasks of the communist parties and the revolutionary struggle in the countries of the capitalist world, according to their stage of economic development. Chile fell into the category of being a semi-colonial country. Independent in name only, Chile was dominated by a feudal land-holding aristocracy and a weak national bourgeoisie whose loyalties were divided between the rival imperialisms of Great Britain and the USA. Given this basic situation, the tasks of the PCCh were to organise and lead an agrarian and anti-imperialist revolutionary movement which would liberate the country from the rule of the imperialists and their Chilean allies. In the process of national liberation, the revolutionary

(28) Ibid. pp275-283.

movement under the direction of the PCCh would thrust Chile through the bourgeois democratic stage of its development which the indigenous bourgeoisie had been unable to accomplish and open the way for socialist revolution.(29) According to the Comintern, the principal motor force for the achievement of these objectives was to be a broad mass movement based on an alliance between the less prosperous peasantry and the urban proletariat, dominated by a strong and disciplined PCCh. When the capitalist system was brought to the point of final collapse, both by its inherent contradictions and by the determined actions of the PCCh and its allies, soviets (committees of peasants, workers and soldiers) were to be formed and the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution undertaken.(30)

Although the strategy outlined in the Comintern's Programme did not have an immediate bearing on the expulsion of Hidalgo, the burden of third period policies ran counter to Hidalgo's efforts to organise a united front with the bourgeois opponents of Ibáñez. Moreover, third period policies led the SSA to issue instructions to the PCCh to

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- (29) The Comintern postulated five stages of economic development in history, socialism representing the conclusion of the historical process, preceded by capitalism. See Kermit McKenzie The Comintern and World Revolution 1928-1943 (London, 1964) p63.
- (30) The Sixth Comintern Congress itself did not work out the details of the application of its strategy for Chile. The Buró Sud Americano(BSA) - the SSA's name was changed when it moved from Buenos Aires to Montevideo in 1930 - did this in conjunction with the PCCh. See Las Grandes Luchas Revolucionarias del Proletariado Chileno (Santiago, 1932) and Hacia la formación de un verdadero partido de clase (Santiago, 1933). Hereafter these two documents will be cited as Las Grandes Luchas and Hacia la formación.

withdraw Hidalgo from the Senate and to take the struggle against Ibáñez into the streets - instructions which Hidalgo rejected.(31) However, third period policies also ran counter to the central tactic advocated by the group which later emerged triumphant in the struggle to control the PCCh - namely, the use of the legal trade union structure as the vehicle for opposition to Ibáñez. Indeed, third period policy demanded the destruction of legal unionism. Thus, it was Hidalgo's refusal to accept the new policies and the directions of the SSA, rather than the reformism and collaborationism of which he was accused, that led to his expulsion. Hidalgo's intransigence soon after the PCCh had been accepted as a full member of the Comintern and at a time when the Comintern was busy rooting out Trotsky and his supporters and imposing a greater degree of uniformity on its Latin American members, could not be overlooked. There is also some reason to suppose that the SSA was by no means unhappy that Hidalgo took the stand he did. Certainly, by arranging for the expulsion of Hidalgo, the SSA conveniently accomplished a number of objectives. Firstly, it enabled the SSA to create a leadership in the PCCh which owed its position largely to the SSA's intervention and which, for that reason, should prove tractable in the future. Secondly, by arranging for the expulsion of Hidalgo, the SSA brought the PCCh into line with international communist experience by purging a figure of Trotsky-like proportions and provided the PCCh with a useful whipping-boy for its past failures and mistakes.

(31) En defensa pl9.

The expulsion of Hidalgo and the campaign against his supporters which the Valparaíso CC began to wage in the early months of 1931 did not become public knowledge until after Ibáñez's fall in July 1931. However, the Valparaíso CC had begun to take steps to bring the PCCh's actions into line with third period policies in the latter part of 1930. In November 1930, Contreras Labarca stood as an independent candidate in a congressional by-election for Valparaíso and, eschewing electoral pacts, used the opportunity to indulge in some emotional rhetoric and fulminate against 'social fascists and opportunists' - without leaving the seat of his relegation.(32) In the new year, the PCCh and FOCh managed to publish clandestine manifestos which spelt out the most salient features of the new policies. In one such manifesto, the workers were exhorted to use the strike weapon to mount an insurrection against the Ibáñez regime. Furthermore, they were instructed to break with the legal trade union structure and warned against 'false working class parties'.(33) But the PCCh's exhortations to the workers to undertake determined, independent and revolutionary actions had little effect. Whilst Ibáñez remained in office, it was as much as the PCCh could do to organise the occasional public meeting and distribute

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- (32) La Unión, Valparaíso 16.11.1930. Contreras Labarca polled 3,400 votes - 10% of the votes cast.
- (33) FOCh Manifesto A la clase trabajadora n.d. but probably published in early 1931. It contained no attacks on the hidalguistas. Photocopy Museo Recabarren.

clandestine manifestos.(34)

Agitation inspired by the PCCh or by any other opponent of Ibáñez had little to do with the final collapse of his government in July 1931, although the PCCh claimed that he was brought down by the struggle of the masses.(35) Rather, it was Ibáñez's failure to find solutions to the economic crisis generated by the Wall Street crash and the subsequent World Depression which caused his allies to withdraw their support and impelled his departure from office. The impact of the world economic crisis on Chile was of such proportions that by 1932 tax revenue from the exports of nitrates and copper which usually provided the Chilean exchequer with 70% of its income, had declined by 87%.(36) By the end of 1931, according to the British Chargé d'Affaires in Santiago, Chile was, to all intents and purposes, bankrupt.(37) The social cost of the economic crisis was catastrophic. Between 1929 and 1932, real wages fell by 40% and in 1931 alone 100,000 workers lost their jobs and an estimated 120,000 people were forced to migrate from the northern nitrate provinces to the centre and south of the country.(38) The crisis

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- (34) El Trabajador Latino Americano, Montevideo, Year 3, March/April 1931 reported two public meetings which the FOCh and the PCCh managed to hold in early 1931. But these were not reported in the Chilean press.
- (35) Las Grandes Luchas p9; Bandera Roja 13.8.1931.
- (36) Frederick B. Pike Chile and the United States 1880-1962 (Notre Dame, 1963) p209.
- (37) Foreign Office Records (FOR) FO 371/15820, A730/219, H. Chilton to Sir John Simon, 9.1.1932.
- (38) Frederick B. Pike op. cit. p209; FOR FO 371/15080, A7384/1832/9, H. Chilton to Sir John Simon, 20.11.31.

continued unabated during most of 1932 and only towards the end of that year were some chinks perceived in the pervading gloom.(39)

The economic crisis and the social distress it generated produced a political turbulence which has rarely been paralleled in Chile's history as an independent nation. Until the worst effects of the economic crisis began to recede, no Chilean government was secure from revolutionary threats. Six weeks after Ibáñez had fled to Buenos Aires, the petty officers and men of the Chilean Navy mutinied in protest against proposed wage cuts and for a brief moment Chile appeared to teeter on the brink of a revolutionary abyss. Even the election of President Juan Esteban Montero in October 1931 and the formal restoration of civilian rule did not serve to calm political passions. The inability of Montero to find rapid and acceptable solutions to the economic crisis alienated his erstwhile supporters and produced a series of conspiracies against his government. In December 1931, a group of PCCh members and sympathisers, intoxicated by third period rhetoric, tried to ignite the flame of revolution in Chile by assaulting the local Army barracks in the provincial town of Copiapó.(40) However, a far more serious threat to Montero's government came from the supporters of Alessandri and Ibáñez who sought to oust

(39) FOR FO 371/16565 Department of Overseas Trade, Report on Economic Conditions in Chile, March 1933, Ref. no. C4126 pp15-16.

(40) The best single contemporary account of this event is an article by Osvaldo Quijada Cerda in Cuadernos Libres, Santiago, 1932, entitled 'La Pascua Trágica de Copiapó y Vallenar'.

Montero from power and replace him by their respective leaders. Moreover, to the conspiracies of the alessandristas and ibañistas were added those of a new force which had emerged in the aftermath of Ibáñez's fall - the socialists.(41) In June 1932, Montero, provoked by the intense atmosphere of conspiracy and expectancy which had been building up for some months, precipitated his own downfall by sacking Colonel Marmaduke Grove from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Air Force.(42) Grove, supported by socialists and ibañistas and egged on by Alessandri, forced President Montero from office and established the short-lived Socialist Republic.(43) After twelve days the more conservative officers of the Armed Forces re-asserted themselves, forced Grove and the socialist, Eugenio Matte Hurtado, from the revolutionary Junta and allowed an ibañista, Carlos Dávila, to take control. Dávila remained in office for a further three months until the Army decided to act once more and return the country to constitutional rule in September 1932. In the following month, fresh presidential elections were held and Arturo Alessandri emerged triumphant from a five-cornered fight

(41) See Julio César Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, p31 for an account of several new socialist parties which emerged after Ibáñez's fall.

(42) Carlos Charlin Del Avión Rojo a la República Socialista (Santiago, 1972) p622, p684; Carlos Sáez op. cit., III, p131.

(43) See Carlos Charlin op. cit. pp610-789 for a detailed account of the rise and fall of the Socialist Republic.

to occupy the Presidency for the second time.(44)

The restitution of constitutional normality marked by the return of Alessandri to the Presidency and the gradual retreat of the economic crisis did not automatically signify the return of political tranquility to Chile. For the first few years of his second term of office, Alessandri felt threatened by the activities of opponents whose methods were conspiratorial and whose ends were the unconstitutional seizure of power. In dealing with both real and imagined threats to his government, Alessandri relied on special police powers granted by Congress for limited periods of time and on the ability of the police to watch and harass his opponents when these powers were not in effect.

It was against this background then, that the PCCh sought to implement third period policies, capture the hegemony of the Chilean working class movement and deliver the final blows to a tottering capitalist system. And, indeed, from its viewpoint, conditions did seem propitious for the rapid reconstruction of the PCCh and for the development of the revolutionary struggle. Widespread unemployment, the bitter struggles for power amongst competing sectors of the bourgeoisie, the evidence of unrest

(44) Alessandri received 187,914 votes; Grove, 60,856; two candidates of traditional parties received 90,000 between them and Elías Lafertte, the candidate of the official PCCh polled 4,128 votes. Germán Urzúa Valenzuela Los Partidos Políticos Chilenos (Santiago, 1968) p76.

amongst the Armed Forces, the failure of successive governments to grapple effectively with the problems produced by the economic crisis and the growth of support for socialist remedies to ease Chile's ills - all seemed to suggest that revolution was fast approaching. Moreover, despite the PCCh's weak and fragmented nature as it emerged from clandestinity, there seemed to be little reason to doubt that it would be able to recapture the loyalties of significant sectors of the working class movement which it, and the FOCh, had led in the heroic struggles of the recent past. Not least of the factors which appeared to bode well for the PCCh was the closer interest which the Comintern, through its Buró Sud-Americano (BSA), was showing in the party's internal affairs and public activities. With the expert aid and advice of the BSA, with a clear strategy and policies designed to reap the maximum advantage from the prevailing crisis conditions, the PCCh seemed set for a period of success and achievement.

In the months following Ibáñez's downfall, the PCCh did indeed manage to reactivate some of its local and provincial organisations, resurrect the FOCh and to recommence the publication of PCCh and FOCh newspapers in Santiago and a series of provincial cities.(45) In the

(45) The most important PCCh newspapers during the early 1930s were Bandera Roja (Santiago) and El Comunista (Antofagasta); for its part, the FOCh published Justicia in Santiago, Antofagasta and Iquique. Publication of all these papers was frequently interrupted by lack of funds and police persecution. Other PCCh and FOCh newspapers included El Despertar del Pueblo (Iquique, 1931-33), La Defensa Obrera (Tocopilla, 1931-33), La Voz Obrera (Concepción, 1931-32), Unidad Obrera and Frente Único (Santiago, 1934-35).

longer run, however, the PCCh failed to make good the losses it had sustained under Ibáñez, let alone achieve the ambitious goals indicated by Comintern policy. Why was this the case?

Perhaps the most important set of factors in the PCCh's failure in the early 1930s concerned those same crisis conditions which, at first sight, had seemed so favourable for the PCCh. Widespread unemployment, for example, may have been seen as a sure sign that the capitalist system was collapsing, but its immediate practical consequences did not benefit the party. Although some of the workers forced to migrate from the mining zones took the Communist message to other parts of Chile, many lost all contact with the PCCh with the result that the party's strength was sapped in its traditional strongholds without producing commensurate advantages elsewhere. Furthermore, widespread unemployment made those Communists who had been fortunate enough to retain their jobs reluctant to undertake activities which could endanger their livelihoods. Finally, since many party members were unemployed, few could afford to pay dues and the PCCh was desperately short of funds throughout the early 1930s.(46)

Furthermore, if the political turmoil of the early

(46) R.J. Alexander in Communism in Latin America, p178 has suggested that the PCCh was in regular receipt of Comintern funds during the early 1930s. Not unnaturally, Chilean Communists deny this and claim that the party was self-financing, relying on dues payments - and on donations from one wealthy member, Amador Paira. José Vega Díaz Años de Lucha (Santiago, 1962) pp64-65. But Paira, a film and theatre impresario with commercial links abroad (El Siglo, 1.3.1941), would have been an ideal channel for Comintern funds. On balance, it seems probable that the PCCh was in receipt of some Comintern funds during the early 1930s - if only to finance the trips of Chilean delegates to Montevideo and Moscow - but it is unlikely that such funds constituted a regular or important source of revenue for the party.

1930s suggested that the revolution was at hand, it also moved governments to use all the means at their disposal to deal with their more dangerous opponents. Although the PCCh was, in fact, too weak to fall into this category, as the self-proclaimed party of revolution it was the logical target for the hostility of the authorities, guilty or not of involvement in specific efforts to overthrow the government. Party activists were detained, tortured and banished; party newspapers were censored, seized and destroyed. In short, at no time during the early 1930s was the PCCh free from the hostile surveillance and harassment of the authorities.

Finally, even the growth of popular support for socialist solutions to Chile's current difficulties did not work automatically to the benefit of the PCCh. Established parties like the PR and the PD incorporated socialist planks into their programmes in an effort to attract popular support while, of even greater concern to the PCCh, a series of new socialist parties emerged after the fall of Ibáñez which competed directly for the loyalties of the workers.(47) Although the PCCh was hostile to these new parties, the popular enthusiasms ignited by the Socialist Republic had, by the end of 1932, converted the socialists into an electoral force of significance. When the socialist parties came together to form the Partido Socialista de Chile(PS) in

(47) The most important of these new socialist parties were Nueva Acción Pública, Partido Socialista Marxista, Orden Socialista, Acción Revolucionaria Socialista and Partido Socialista Unificado. Julio Cesar Jobet, El Partido Socialista, I, p31.

1933, the PCCh was faced with a formidable challenge to its pretensions to the leadership of the revolutionary left in Chile. From the first, the PS counted on considerable popular and trade union support; it had impeccable revolutionary antecedents, boasted a marxist ideology and was led by two charismatic figures of national prominence - Marmaduke Grove and Eugenio Matte Hurtado.(48)

If, despite first appearances, the conditions generated by the economic crisis hindered rather than helped the PCCh's revival, the Comintern policies designed to assist the recovery of the party proved inappropriate and counter-productive. Broadly speaking, the success of third period policy rested on two assumptions; firstly, that the capitalist system was on the point of collapse and secondly, that the PCCh could rapidly acquire the strength to influence decisively the outcome of events. Unfortunately for the PCCh, neither assumption proved to be correct.

Although the capitalist system was subjected to enormous pressures by the economic crisis, it did not reach the expected point of collapse. Perhaps more important still, the political forces which had an interest in its survival remained basically intact - if in some disarray. Despite the emergence of the socialists as a notable political force during 1932, the key political groupings in post-Ibáñez

(48) Eugenio Matte Hurtado, was the the civilian caudillo of the Socialist Republic and a key figure in the foundation of the PS. See Julio César Jobet, ibid., I, pp99-104. See also Paul W. Drake 'Socialism and Populism in Chile; the origins of the left-ward movement of the Chilean electorate 1931-33' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1971) for a thorough treatment of the origins and early years of the PS.

Chile continued to be the military and civilian supporters of the rival caudillos, Alessandri and Ibáñez, while the non-aligned sectors of the traditional parties also remained a force to be reckoned with. While alessandristas and ibañistas were prepared to use extra-constitutional means to return to power, neither they nor the traditional parties had any wish to see Chile plunge into the abyss of social revolution. Thus, although alessandristas and ibañistas attempted to use the Naval Mutiny and the Socialist Republic for their own ends, when those movements proved not to be susceptible to their manipulation and control, they soon threw their support behind existing institutions. Furthermore, the political turbulence of 1931 and 1932 produced a reaction in favour of public order and the existing political system in many Chileans. In the aftermath of the Socialist Republic, non-revolutionary sectors helped to create the Milicias Republicanas, a paramilitary organisation dedicated to the defence of constitutional order. While the Milicias Republicanas were of dubious military value, they did represent the clear determination of broad middle class sectors to resist all attempts to impose revolutionary change in Chile.(49) The Socialist Republic also precipitated a fundamental change of attitude in the Armed Forces towards their own involvement in politics. Alarmed by the spectre of revolution and civil war which that event had raised, most officers decided to restore

(49) The General Staff of the Chilean Army reckoned that 30% of the Milicias were too old, 40% would be needed at home or at work in an emergency and 30% were of no use as allies or enemies. FOR FO 371/16567, A4222/73/9, dispatch from H. Chilton to Sir John Simon, dated 18.5.1933.

civilian rule to Chile and to return the military institutions to their constitutional role - although small groups of officers and NCOs continued to conspire in favour of one caudillo or another.

The social misery and political turmoil produced by the economic crisis during 1931 and 1932, then, did not presage the final collapse of the capitalist system. While some Chileans sought revolutionary solutions to Chile's problems, most sought the remedy within the existing political system and, indeed, in the face of revolutionary challenge rallied to its defence. Thus, by the time Alessandri took office as President of the Republic for the second time, he could count on the support of practically all the political parties bar those of the extreme left, the Milicias Republicanas and the bulk of the Armed Forces.

The second assumption on which the success of third period policies rested, namely that the PCCh could rapidly acquire the strength to influence the outcome of events also proved unfounded. Indeed, given the condition in which the PCCh emerged from clandestinity in 1931, it was a very optimistic assumption. During the Ibáñez dictatorship, the PCCh's electoral support had been dispersed, its membership had been reduced by an estimated 90% and its trade union arm, the FOCh, had all but perished.(50) Moreover, soon after Ibáñez's fall the division between Hidalgo and his supporters and those who backed the official, BSA-sponsored CC was plain for all to see. The first

(50) En defensa, p83.

task undertaken by the official CC was the justification of its expulsion of Hidalgo and the purging of a number of his more prominent supporters.(51) Although the hidalguistas petitioned for re-admittance to the party and for a National PCCh Congress to consider their case - as was their right under internal party regulations - the official CC was intransigent. Unable to return to the PCCh except on terms of the most abject surrender, the hidalguistas rapidly assumed the Trotskyist role which had been assigned to them. They began to create their own organisation, published their own newspapers, became active in trade unions and in elections on their own account - and in 1933, after all efforts to re-enter the PCCh had failed, founded their own party, the Izquierda Comunista.(52) Although the hidalguistas do not appear to have made important inroads into the party's support - except, perhaps, in the Santiago area where Hidalgo polled more votes than Lafertte in the 1931 presidential elections - their activities caused the official PCCh much difficulty and embarrassment.(53) Until 1933, the hidalguistas continued to use the same name as the PCCh, causing considerable confusion amongst

(51) Bandera Roja 22.8.1931.

(52) La Chispa (Santiago) was the hidalguistas' first newspaper but it only survived for a few issues. Izquierda (Santiago) however, was published regularly between 1934 and 1936. In general, the hidalguistas did not have much success in trade unionism but they controlled the powerful Central Único de la Construcción(CUC) and had some influence in the Federación de Maestros (Teachers' Union).

(53) In that election Hidalgo polled 537 votes to Lafertte's 380 in Santiago and also made a relatively fair showing in Antofagasta and Valparaíso. Bandera Roja 4.10.1931.

the electorate and undermining the official PCCh's ability to appeal for popular support. Moreover, their attacks on third period policies and their advocacy of coöperation with other left-wing groups fomented indiscipline in the parent party - as did the charges of supercentralism (servile obedience to the Comintern) and bureaucratism (the entrenched rule of bureaucrats) which they levelled against the leadership of the official PCCh.(54)

Weak and divided, the PCCh was in no condition to contend with the extraordinary pressures which confronted it during the early 1930s and was unable to carry out the systematic work of organisational and ideological improvement needed to convert it into a strong and disciplined party capable of the successful execution of third period policies. Indeed, subjected to constant harassment by the authorities and faced by political forces, both old and new, which showed disconcerting signs of vigour, third period policies drove the party further and further into isolation and locked it into a vicious circle of weakness and defeat.

Practically all of the characteristic features of third period analysis and policy hindered the PCCh's recovery during the early 1930s. The belief in the imminent collapse of the capitalist system led the party to make repeated calls to the workers to embark on revolutionary actions. The calls were rarely answered and alienated many workers who were more concerned with the struggle to survive; in addition they

(54) See La Chispa, no.2, August 1931; no.3, September 1931, for these criticisms - which were common currency in the world struggle between Trotskyists and Stalinists.

gave the authorities all the pretexts they needed to persecute the party. Perhaps more seriously still, third period revolutionary rhetoric seduced some party members into revolutionary adventures which had no chance of success. Thus, on Christmas Eve, 1931, a group of PCCh and FOCh members, urged on by local alessandristas and a government agent provocateur, attacked a military barracks in Copiapó, a small town in the Norte Chico, apparently in the belief that they were igniting the revolutionary spark in Chile.(55) Far from provoking the collapse of the capitalist system, the insurgents only succeeded in causing the death of seven of their own number, the murder of 23 assorted Communists and workers in Vallenar, some 200 kilometres away, and in bringing down a further wave of persecution on the PCCh nationally.(56)

Three and a half years later, this same revolutionary rhetoric probably played a part in the Ranquil uprising in Malleco province. There, colonos evicted from their land in the middle of a harsh winter joined with starving workers from two public works projects (gold washings and the Túnel Las Raíces) in a spontaneous jacquerie.(57) The

(55) See Osvaldo Quijada Cerda's article in Cuadernos Libres for a full account.

(56) See Bandera Roja 14.2.1932; 21.2.1932 for the Communist account of the uprising and the repression which followed. See also El Comunista (Antofagasta) 29.12.1931.

(57) The best single account of the Ranquil uprising may be found in Hugo Morales Benítez's 'Política Social de la Segunda Administración del Presidente Alessandri Palma' (Memoria, Universidad Técnica del Estado, Santiago, 1969) pp44-60. For contemporary accounts of the conditions endured by the workers on Túnel Las Raíces, see Archivo, Dirección General del Trabajo, Providencias 2901-3100 (1934). Report dated 26.2.1934.

insurgents rampaged over a wide area of the desolate and sparsely populated lands of the Alto Bío-Bío, killing a few landowners and storekeepers in the process. Although the movement was undoubtedly precipitated by the great hardship suffered by all three of the groups involved, the involvement of a FOCh trade union, the Sindicato Agrícola de Lonquimay, and the activities of its founder and president, the Communist Juan Leiva Tapia, were enough for the authorities to dub the movement a revolutionary attempt mounted by the Comintern from Montevideo (the seat of the BSA).(58)

An expeditionary force of Carabineros was sent in to restore order - a task they performed with macabre gusto, killing over 200 insurgents.(59) Although geographical considerations alone make it extremely unlikely that there was a revolutionary plot based on Montevideo or anywhere else, the PCCh and the FOCh immediately pledged their support for the insurgents, called for the widening of the insurrection and the overthrow of the 'dictatorship which starves and and assassinates the masses' and urged the formation of soviets.(60) Not surprisingly, the

(58) El Mercurio 4.7.1934; 5.7.1934.

(59) Fernando Pinto Lagarrigue Crónica Política del Siglo XX (Santiago, 1972) p242. See also José Vega Díaz's article 'El Aprendiz de un Comunista' in Principios February/March 1970 and Luis Corvalán Ricardo Fonseca - combatiente ejemplar (Santiago, 1971) p98 for accounts of the murder of Leiva Tapia and other PCCh activists.

(60) Unidad Obrera July 1934, 1st and 4th weeks.

authorities proceeded to arrest and detain Communist leaders throughout the country.

According to the BSA, the same belief in the imminent collapse of the capitalist system led the PCCh to make tactical errors in relation to the Naval Mutiny of September 1931.(61) Even though the mutineers were clearly motivated by financial and professional considerations, the PCCh's first response was to call on them to form soviets and launch the revolution - a call which was rudely rebuffed by the mutineers in Coquimbo who threatened the FOCh delegation with a ducking and who took some pains to disassociate themselves from the Communists.(62) Although the PCCh managed to overcome some of the mutineers' misgivings in the final stages of their movement, the BSA alleged that the party's hard line approach at the crucial early stages of the Mutiny prevented the PCCh from exerting an influence over its development.(63)

Other aspects of third period policy had equally adverse effects on the PCCh's recovery during the early 1930s. The struggle to capture the hegemony of the working class movement and the insistence on strict independence of action hindered the PCCh's revival as an electoral and trade union force. Although other factors played a part in the PCCh's poor electoral showing, the party was deprived of an instrument which had served it well in the past, the

(61) Las Grandes Luchas pp17-21.
(62) El Mercurio, Valparaíso 3.9.1931.
(63) Las Grandes Luchas p21.

electoral pact. The PCCh won no congressional by-elections in the early 1930s and even when it managed to elect two deputies in the October 1932 general elections, its achievement was overshadowed by that of the hidalguistas who, with less support nationally, managed to elect one deputy and one senator in the same elections through the judicious use of the electoral pact.(64) Even after the PCCh congressmen had taken up their seats, third period policy prevented them from forming part of one of the political committees which negotiated for parliamentary time, thus limiting their effectiveness.(65) Moreover, the failure to elect more congressmen not only deprived the party of additional opportunities to give its views a public airing but deprived it of valuable sources of finance and patronage.

Although the hostile economic conditions might well have recommended courses of action designed to bolster working class unity in the face of what was seen as a capitalist offensive, third period policy and its insistence on independent action dictated otherwise. Thus, the PCCh determined to resurrect the almost moribund FOCh and to destroy legal unionism - or, indeed, any union which did not accept the tutelage of the FOCh. The FOCh and the PCCh

(64) Communist candidates polled 5,076 votes in October 1932 and José Vega Díaz and Andrés Escobar Díaz were elected deputies for Antofagasta and Santiago respectively. Bandera Roja 5.11.1932. With the aid of pacts with the Partido Socialista Unificado and the Partido Radical Socialista Hidalgo was elected to the Senate for Antofagasta and Emilio Zapata to the Chamber of Deputies for Santiago. En Defensa p30.

(65) Boletines del Congreso, Diputados, Sesiones Extraordinarias, 1933, session 28a, 22.11.1933, pl306. Speech by Andrés Escobar Díaz.

delivered savage attacks on non-communist trade union leaders and attempted to demonstrate to their supporters that their interests would be better served by joining the FOCh. Instructions were issued to sympathizers to re-constitute the old FOCh consejos and to form oposiciones sindicales revolucionarios (OSRs) inside rival unions in an attempt to win them over to the FOCh.(66) While the FOCh did manage to resurrect some of its provincial and local organisations during 1931 and 1932, the tactics it used against rival unions appear to have failed - at least in general. Few OSRs were formed and while some appear to have succeeded in splitting the unions in which they were active, they generated considerable hostility against the Communists and no significant gains appear to have been scored.(67) Despite the FOCh's antagonism, legal unions continued to flourish and few of them opted to join the FOCh. At the FOCh's National Convention held in Santiago in early 1933, only 15 of the 150 delegates came from legal unions.(68) Furthermore, given the hostile economic climate, the FOCh's efforts to launch strikes at every conceivable opportunity were doomed to failure. Although the FOCh claimed some successes during 1931 and 1932, these appear to have rested

(66) Boletín del CC no.4, February 1933.

(67) See the introduction to Resoluciones de la primera conferencia de la CSLA (Confederación Sindical Latino-Americana) (Santiago, 1933) for an account of the deficiencies of OSRs in Chile.

(68) Justicia, Antofagasta 15.3.1933.

on parallel calls by other trade union and political groups. Certainly, by 1933 and 1934, the FOCh was having difficulty in persuading its own members to respond to strike calls let alone the masses as a whole.(69)

Strict independence of action and the battle for the hegemony of the working class movement also prevented the PCCh from forming fruitful alliances with other political groups during the early 1930s and prevented the party from increasing its admittedly slight chances of influencing events. This was particularly evident during the Socialist Republic. The PCCh's reaction to the June 4th coup was confused; the CC did urge a qualified support for the revolutionary Junta but, at the same time, it called on the workers to form soviets (Consejos Revolucionarios de Obreros y Campesinos - CROCs) and to press for the implementation of a full-blooded revolutionary programme.(70) With the arrival of a BSA delegate in Chile, however, the CC dropped its conditional support and relations between the Junta and the party deteriorated; on the eve of his own fall from power, Grove promised to deal with the Communists 'a mano dura'.(71)

Although local PCCh groups showed a tendency to cooperate with socialists and even hidalguistas during the events and the elections of 1931 and 1932, third period hostility towards all non-communist groups took an

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- (69) See Boletín del CC no.4, Feb. 1933 and Izquierda, 1st quincena, June 1934 for details of strikes called by FOCh to which its members did not respond.
- (70) CC Manifesto, 6th June, 1932 entitled 'Guerra encarnizada contra la reacción monterista y clerical. Fuera el Ibañismo', published in El Comunista, Antofagasta, 15.6.1932.
- (71) La Opinión, 11.6.1932. Radio speech by Grove.

increasing hold. As the extent of the socialists' popular appeal became clearer, the grovistas were identified as the principal obstacle to the PCCh's struggle to capture the hegemony of the working class and Communists launched a series of vituperative attacks on Socialist leaders who were denounced as social fascists and class traitors.(71) The PCCh's attacks on the new Socialist Party and its hostility towards all attempts, other than its own, to unite the left against the Alessandri administration, progressively isolated it from the mainstream of political life.

In general, then, third period policies hindered the PCCh's recovery by forcing it into profitless confrontations with the authorities and by widening and deepening the breach between the PCCh and its most likely allies.

Third period policies tampered with the PCCh's internal affairs as well as hindering the party's recovery as a political, electoral and trade union force. In particular, third period policy demanded that the PCCh be proletarianised. Proletarianisation had three major facets. First, the principal objectives of the PCCh's recruitment drives were to be workers employed in the fundamental industries - nitrates, copper, coal mining and transport. Secondly, the whole party structure was to be imbued with proletarian, that is bolshevik, virtues; this meant that

(71) See Hacia la formación pp20-25. See also Juan Siquieros El Grovismo, principal obstáculo para la revolución obrera y campesina en Chile (Santiago, n.d.). Juan Siquieros was the pseudonym of Gerardo Seguel, a CC member.

the membership had to belong to a cell for political activity, belong to a fraction for trade union work and be properly acquainted with the use and function of democratic centralism and self-criticism and with bolshevik theory in general. Finally, proletarianisation signified that each directive level inside the party should include a majority of active (as opposed to unemployed) workers amongst its members; they should be 'workers' both from the viewpoint of social extraction and from the perspective of identification with bolshevik theory and Comintern policy.(73)

The PCCh's record of success in these organisational tasks was no more impressive than its achievements in other spheres of third period policy. Urged on by the BSA, the PCCh launched a number of recruitment campaigns in the early 1930s with targets which ranged from the national and ambitious 'Double the party in two months' to the regional and frenetic 'Quintuple the party in one month'.(74) These targets were rarely reached and when they were, external events rather than systematic party work appear to have been the cause. Thus, for example, the Antofagastan party reported a massive influx of new members during the period of political effervescence which preceded and accompanied the Socialist Republic.(75) Immediately afterwards, however, the party was thrust into another period of clandestinity and probably lost most of its new recruits.

(73) Las Grandes Luchas pp34-35.

(74) Bandera Roja 22.10.1931; El Comunista, Antofagasta 11.6.1932.

(75) Ibid. 8.5.1932; 11.6.1932.

The PCCh's effective national membership was probably no more than a thousand during 1931 and 1932 and, while a calmer political climate during 1933 and 1934 may have allowed the party to make some slower and steadier gains it is unlikely to have equalled the 1925/26 highpoint of some 4,000 to 5,000 members until 1935.

The PCCh was no more successful in recruiting from those working class sectors most coveted by the Comintern. The peasantry and industrial workers were to be the motor force of revolution in Chile but the PCCh reported minimal success in both sectors during the early 1930s. According to the BSA, in May 1932 the PCCh had few active organisations in its traditional strongholds of the coal and nitrate industries and none at all in the copper industry; despite the nominal existence of Peasant Commissions in the PCCh's tables of organisation, no significant gains had been made in the countryside either.(76)

Although there is evidence of party work in the other sectors indicated as targets for recruitment by the BSA, such as women, the unemployed, members of the Armed Forces and the Araucanian Indians, successes were again minimal. The PCCh did recruit some naval mutineers dismissed the service but it was so chary of approaching serving members of the Armed Forces that some soldiers evidently approached the PCCh independently and asked to participate in the soviets set up in June 1932.(77)

(76) Las Grandes Luchas pp31-32.

(77) El Comunista, Antofagasta, 15.6.1932.

As for its efforts to organise among the Indians, these foundered on the party's lack of cadres able to converse in the Indian languages and on the cultural poverty and apathy of the Indians themselves.(78)

Ironically the PCCh made its most striking gains, such as they were, not amongst mature workers forced into revolutionary positions by bitter experience but amongst the young and the educated - who were often of middle class extraction. According to the BSA, these successes owed little to the organisational efforts of the PCCh itself.(79) Rather, the creation of the Federación de Juventudes Comunistas(FJC) and the Grupo Avance were the product of the spontaneous reaction by young workers and young university students, respectively, to the social misery generated by the economic crisis. Both the FJC and the Grupo Avance proved to be mixed blessings for the PCCh. By the end of 1932, the PCCh was complaining that the FJC had rejected its tutelage and regarded itself as the vanguard of the revolutionary movement in Chile.(80) Grupo Avance, on the other hand, which published its own newspaper and had branches in several provincial cities, proved susceptible to the appeals of Trotskyism and in 1933 foundered mainly because of bitter disputes between the Trotskyists and the oficialistas.(81) Despite the difficulties which the

(78) Justicia 23.2.1933.

(79) Las Grandes Luchas p32. Boletín Político No.1 November 1932.

(80) Ibid.

(81) See José Miguel Varas op. cit. p84 for Volodia Teitelboim's account of the split in Grupo Avance. See also Quién dividió el Grupo Avance? (Santiago, n.d.) for a hidalguista account.

PCCh had with both groups, however, they provided the party with a useful supply of cadres and future leaders.

The PCCh attributed its failure to reach its recruitment objectives to a variety of reasons though not to the third period policies it was trying to implement. According to the PCCh, its failure to recruit was the product of an ingrained reluctance on the part of many members to accept the need for a mass party, a reluctance which was exacerbated by fears of recruiting members who might later prove to be police spies.(82) Furthermore, according to the BSA, recruits were often expected to have a prior grasp of marxism and were frequently given tasks beyond their capabilities. Failure to recruit was blamed also on the party's frequent retreats into clandestinity - and the reluctance of some local groups to re-emerge from clandestinity when conditions changed - and on a new system of dues payments which expected members to contribute 1% of their income to party funds.(83)

Recruitment should have been accompanied by ideological and political training but, where it did exist, such training seems to have been of a rudimentary and haphazard nature. Not until January 1933 did the CC announce a detailed and ambitious plan for the training of 575 activists throughout the country.(84) In July of the same year, it announced another, less ambitious, plan but, according to the PCCh itself, neither plan was realised to

(82) Bandera Roja 5.3.1932

(83) Ibid.

(84) Plan de estudios de un curso de capacitación
(Santiago, 1933)

any significant degree.(85) However, the chief instrument for training was not the special course for cadres but the party press which regularly published articles on the proper use and function of the cell, the fraction, democratic centralism and self-criticism. But as an instrument of instruction the party press left much to be desired since it was frequently forced to close by police harassment and by lack of funds.

These efforts to create a powerful, agile and disciplined party were clearly ineffective. Cells and fractions rarely functioned properly and on average only 10% of the membership paid dues during the early 1930s, even though the payment of dues was considered a sacred duty.(86) More seriously, there was at times an alarming lack of effective links between the various echelons of the party. Local and regional organisations often did not respond to circulars and directions sent by the CC. Such was the lack of communication that the Communists of Coquimbo did not inform the CC that a naval mutiny was brewing until the last possible moment even though they had knowledge of the movement several days before it occurred; the Communists of Copiapó apparently launched their uprising without informing or consulting the CC.(87)

The absence of effective links and a defective

(85) Bandera Roja 17.2.1934.

(86) Por la Paz y por nuevas victorias del Frente Popular, Resoluciones del XI Congreso del PCCh, Santiago, 1939, finance report by Andrés Escobar, p5.

(87) Conferencia Regional del PCCh (Coquimbo) p2; Elías Lafertte op. cit. p239.

appreciation of third period policy led some CRs and local PCCh groups into political errors during the early 1930s. The most dramatic of these was the Copiapó 'uprising' - an action which was classified by the CC as being the product of putchismo - a leftist deviation which stemmed from a belief that the revolution could be brought about through a golpe del estado rather than through a mass movement.(88) However, according to the CC, rightist deviations - a tendency to collaborate with other political groups, to lack independence in the face of class enemies and to make ideological concessions to adversaries - represented the greater danger.(89) Indeed, during 1931 and 1932, local PCCh groups and CRs showed a natural tendency to cooperate with other political groups. In the aftermath of Ibáñez's fall, many local PCCh groups joined civilist committees designed to prevent any attempt to return Ibáñez to office and during the Socialist Republic, some joined committees designed to support Grove and the revolutionary Junta.(90) In elections, too, during 1931 and 1932, local PCCh groups made deals with other political parties or supported candidates of other parties.(91) And in September

(88) Boletín del CC, no.6, February 1933.

(89) Ibid.

(90) Conferencia Regional del PCCh (Coquimbo) p3, p4. See also Justicia, Antofagasta 31.1.1932 and 2.12.1932 for evidence of PCCh cooperation with the Partido Socialista Marxista and the Nueva Acción Pública in committees and organisations designed to defend public liberties.

(91) The Communists of Combarbala, for example, supported an hidalguista in the 1932 congressional elections on the principle that a working class deviationist was better than any 'gancho de la burguesía'. Conferencia Regional del PCCh (Coquimbo) Others, in Iquique for example, cooperated with grovistas. Bandera Roja 19.11.1932.

1932, the CRs of Antofagasta and Iquique joined committees with other political forces to support General Vignola in his confrontation with General Blanche - the confrontation which led to the restoration of civilian rule after Dávila's fall.(92)

How far these left and right wing deviations were the product of a conscious rejection of third period policy and how far they were a product of a sincere misunderstanding of that policy is difficult to say. Whatever the cause, it is clear that the CC was at least partially responsible. Often the CC's instructions arrived too late to influence the actions of subordinate organisations; sometimes no instructions were sent. Moreover, like the lower echelons, the CC itself showed a tendency to drift into right and left wing 'errors'. Thus, for example, in January 1932, the CC cooperated with a whole range of political and workers' groups - including alessandristas - in a protest strike against the Montero regime.(93) Similarly, during the Socialist Republic, the PCCh did lend the Grove Junta a limited support.(94) While the CC appears to have been less disposed to commit errors of the left, it was accused of having known of the strength of golpista sentiment inside the party and of having done nothing to clarify the party's attitude to such movements - an omission which contributed

(92) Boletín del CC no.4, February 1933. For details of the confrontation between Generals Vignola and Blanche see Frederick Nunn Chilean Politics 1920-31 pp173-176.

(93) Bandera Roja 10.1.1932; 14.1.1932.

(94) See El Comunista, Antofagasta, 15.6.1932 for a copy of a CC Manifesto dated 6.6.1932.

to the bloody fiasco of Copiapó.(95)

According to the CC, one of the reasons why it committed political errors was because of the absence of collective work in the CC. And indeed, although the CC was expanded to include thirty members in February 1932, members in charge of commissions formed to deal with specific tasks such as organisation, trade union affairs, work amongst the peasantry, agitation and propaganda, tended to run them as private domains without much reference to the CC as a whole.(96) According to one disgruntled CC member, Victor González, during 1932 the whole CC was run by a small clique of intellectuals which kept the contents of correspondence with the BSA and the provincial organisations to itself. Furthermore, he claimed that as a member of the CC for eight months and as a member of the Buró Político for six weeks, he was no better informed than any party member in Santiago.(97)

The complaints of Victor González were one of the manifestations of a bitter struggle which afflicted the CC during 1932. By June 1932, the failures of party policy and continued harassment by the authorities had evidently caused considerable discontent and despondency in some sectors of the party. When the BSA launched its campaign to proletarianise the party in March 1932, disgruntled members of the CR Santiago took the BSA's instruction, that all directive levels inside the party should include a

(95) Conferencia Regional del PCCh (Coquimbo) p3.
(96) Bandera Roja 14.2.1932.
(97) Boletín del CC no.6, February 1933.

majority of workers, to their hearts and launched an attack on the leadership of the group of 'intellectuals' who, they claimed, dominated the CC. How far the dissidents were motivated by working class antagonisms towards 'intellectuals' is difficult to say but it was certainly true that the CC's Secretary General, Contreras Labarca, was a professional man of middle class extraction, as was his assistant, Marcos Chamudez. Moreover, a number of other members of the Grupo Avance had risen to prominence inside the party in the months following Ibañez's fall. Nonetheless, the basic reasons for the emergence of the Grupo de Oposición in Santiago in mid-1932, which came to include a majority of the CR Santiago and three CC members, appear to have been political. Although the Grupo de Oposición changed its name to the Movimiento hacia la bolchevisación del partido in order to avoid confusion with Trotskyist opposition groups, the charges which it levelled against the CC were very similar to those which were being made by the hidalguistas. The Movimiento claimed that the CC was dominated by intellectuals, that it had mismanaged party funds and that it suffered from supercentralism and bureaucratism. More fundamentally, the Movimiento accused the CC of lacking a real strategy and following policies which only served to bring down government oppression and persecution on the party.(98)

The CC accused the Movimiento of using Trotskyist tactics and suggested that the Movimiento's mechanical application of the concept of proletarianisation was a

(98) See ibid. for an account of the Movimiento's charges.

product of its members' lack of political education and their envy of the rapid rise to prominence of recently recruited young activists. According to the CC, the Movimiento's advocacy of a proletarian as opposed to an agrarian anti-imperialist revolution aligned it with the socialists, while the charges of bureaucratism, financial mismanagement and the demand for an independent Marxist analysis of Chilean reality aligned it with the hidalguistas. (99)

Although the CC accused the Movimiento of disarticulating party work in Santiago at a time when the PCCh was experiencing sharp persecution, its challenge had no ramifications outside Santiago and was apparently defeated with ease. By December 1932, the three CC members who had joined the Movimiento had been prevailed upon to make public confession of their errors but, according to Victor González, they had recanted only because the CC had accepted a good part of their criticisms. Certainly, the CC PCCh and the JEF FOCh later took considerable pains to prove that the majority of their members were not intellectuals. (100) And the expulsion of one party member in July 1933, in part for describing the proletarianisation process as 'police terror and worker demagogy' suggests that the CC did take more determined steps to proletarianise directives. (101) Furthermore, the CC apparently accepted the charge of super-centralism, not, however, with regard to its own rigid

(99) Ibid.

(100) Ibid. Justicia 18.1.1933.

(101) Hacia la formación p8.

obedience to Comintern directions but in relation to the tendency of subordinate organisations to await CC instructions before proceeding to act.(102)

If the challenge of the Movimiento inside the CC was defeated with relative ease, the PCCh continued to have difficulties with members who were inspired by hidalguista and Trotskyist criticisms of the party. According to the CC, a Party Congress called in April 1933 could not function properly in part because of the activities of the Santiago opposition group, while in July 1933 a number of fairly prominent activists, mainly university students, were expelled for advocating co-operation with the Socialists and with Hidalgo (and for echoing charges of supercentralism and bureaucratism).(103) Even after these expulsions, the PCCh continued to have difficulties with its young activists; in 1934, Luis Hernández Parker and Juan Vargas Puebla were both expelled for Trotskyist crimes but later returned to occupy posts of some importance in the PCCh.(104)

Broadly speaking there appear to have been three basic reactions to third period policies and the failure they brought. Some simply ignored third period policy when the pressure of events dictated other courses of action, others began to question the wisdom of the policies themselves while most responded by retreating into apathy

(102) Plan de estudios de un curso de capacitación
op.cit., p 7.

(103) Hacia la formación p29, pp7-8.

(104) El Imparcial, Santiago, 29.7.1937. Hernández Parker later became the head of the FJC until his expulsion in 1937; Vargas Puebla became a CC member and is still a member of the PCCh - see Appendix E for further details of his career.

and passivity. Watched closely by the BSA, however, the CC could not afford the luxury of prolonged inactivity and the idea of rejecting third period policies outright was quite simply unthinkable. For the CC third period policies were correct by definition and if they failed to produce the expected results, the faults lay in the PCCh's own errors and weaknesses. With the help of the BSA, the CC tried to correct the party's most glaring deficiencies and applied itself to third period policy with renewed vigour. In May 1932, after consultation with the PCCh, the BSA issued Las Grandes Luchas Revolucionarias del Proletariado Chileno which examined the PCCh's most striking weaknesses and gave instructions on how these were to be overcome. However, the events of June 1932 and the months of clandestinity which followed prevented the CC from taking effective action along the lines suggested by the BSA. It was not until December 1932 that the CC held an amplified meeting which dealt with the Movimiento and detailed the party's left and right wing deviations anew.(105)

Apart from those deviations already mentioned, errors of the left included the neglect of work amongst the peasantry and sectarianism, which prevented the PCCh from becoming a mass party. Other right wing deviations included liquidationism (a local PCCh group had apparently changed its name to avoid persecution), 'hiding' (some CRs had evidently failed to re-emerge from clandestinity in time to fight the

October 1932 elections) and disdain towards trade union work and activity amongst youth.(106)

In April 1933 the PCCh held a Congress to continue the work of organisational and political improvement but this Congress was aborted because of the activities of the Santiago opposition group and because it was raided by the police. Indeed, the Congress finished its sessions in the Santiago penitentiary.(107)

The PCCh finally managed to hold a National Conference in Santiago in July 1933, unimpeded by police interference. At that Conference, the PCCh adapted the resolutions of the 12th Session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) to Chilean conditions. The Conference declared that the revolution was fast approaching and warned against the twin perils of passivity and sectarianism which prevented effective links being forged with the masses.(108) Notwithstanding its strictures on sectarianism, the Conference proceeded to indicate that grovistas and hidalguistas were a greater danger to the revolutionary struggle than Alessandri and instructed the PCCh to create a deep abyss between itself and other political parties. Perhaps the most dramatic feature of the Conference was the public criticism of Recabarren which, although expressed in measured terms, had a profound psychological impact inside and outside the party and effectively underlined its commitment to third period isolationism.(109)

(106) Ibid.
(107) José Miguel Varas op. cit. p87.
(108) Hacia la formación pp5-8.
(109) Ibid.

After criticising Recabarren, the Conference proceeded to expel a number of fairly prominent activists for Trotskyist and hidalguista 'crimes' and took steps to strengthen the authority of the CC by ensuring that the provincial organisations were represented on the CC and by suppressing all Political Bureaux other than that of the CC.(110) Despite the instructions and exhortations issued at the July 1933 Conference, a plenary meeting of the CC in January 1934 found that party work since the Conference had been deficient in almost every respect.(111)

Third period policies, then, failed to produce the desired results and actively hindered the PCCh's recovery during the early 1930s. Nevertheless, the persecution and ideological conflict which those policies helped to bring down upon the PCCh were not without their advantages - at least, from the party's standpoint. Strong bonds of allegiance were forged amongst those members who managed to stay the course and a body of activists emerged who could conceive of no life other than that offered by the party. And by the same tokens, a leadership emerged which was particularly loyal to the Comintern and which, with the aid of the BSA, successfully established its control over the party - a control which was not to be seriously challenged for many years to come.

(110) Ibid. p48.

(111) Bandera Roja 17.2.1934.

Chapter 4

**The Popular Front Strategy,
1935-1938.**

The signs of success and achievement which the PCCh began to display in the later 1930s were all the more dramatic for their sharp contrast to the failure and defeat which almost engulfed the party in the years immediately following the fall of Ibáñez. By the end of 1938, the PCCh had ceased to be an insignificant party at the margin of the mainstream of political developments, riven by internal dissensions and persecuted by the authorities. By that time, the PCCh had elected seven representatives to Congress, wielded considerable influence in a unified trade union movement and had played a key role in the electoral coalition which had placed an active member of the Radical Party in the Presidency of the Republic for the first time in Chilean history. Like the failures which had preceded them, the PCCh's successes were the product of interaction between Chilean conditions and Comintern policies.

By the beginning of 1934, Chile was clearly on the road to economic recovery, helped by an upturn in world trade and the rigorous measures taken by President Alessandri's Finance Minister, Gustavo Ross. The key factor in Chile's economic recovery, as it had been in its previous collapse, was the nitrate industry. During the first

quarter of 1934, nitrate exports were almost three times as great as they had been during the same period in 1933 and the number of workers employed by that industry had almost doubled.(1) As the fortunes of the nitrate industry improved, so did those of the whole economy and by May 1934 unemployment had dropped from its official high point of 160,000 in December 1932, to 40,000.(2)

Although there were occasional signs of desperate social unrest after early 1934, like the Ranquil uprising, the recovery of the economy helped to reduce social tensions and sap the vehemence of revolutionary passions. Nevertheless, President Alessandri continued to feel that his regime was in danger and he used special police powers granted by Congress to keep his opponents in check. Indeed, Alessandri's ill-concealed support for the illegal paramilitary Milicias Republicanas, his frequent recourse to special police powers and his harassment of even the legitimate activities of his opponents played a large part in destroying the political consensus which had accompanied him during his first months of office.

When Alessandri took office as President for the second time, in December 1932, he pledged himself to restore order and prosperity to Chile and he pursued those objectives with the same single-mindedness, realism and lack of scruple which had characterised his less orthodox efforts

(1) FOR FO 371/17507, A 4658/230/9, dispatch from R. Mitchell to Sir John Simon, dated 22.5.1934.

(2) Ibid.

to return to power after the fall of Ibáñez.(3) Determined to construct a solid majority for his administration in Congress, he offered the plum posts in his cabinet to members of parties which had opposed his re-election in 1932 (to Liberals and, in one case, to a Conservative disguised as a technocrat) while he gave the PR, his principal support in those elections, two cabinet seats and three ministries of minor importance.(4) For the first few months after Alessandri took office, the PR was prepared to accept this situation and cooperate in government with the right wing parties in the cause of re-establishing order and firm government. However, it was not long before the PR made its sense of grievance felt. In July 1933, it began to make determined efforts to force Alessandri to choose between the right wing parties and the PR as the principal support of his government.(5) Although Alessandri made some attempt to meet the Radicals' demands by promoting a Radical to the Ministry of the Interior in that month and by increasing the PR's share of cabinet seats to three (controlling four ministries), Radical thirst for office was still unslaked.(6)

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- (3) See Ricardo Donoso, Alessandri, agitador y demoledor, II, p95, p57 for accounts of Alessandri's manoeuvres during the Naval Mutiny and the June 1932 coup. See Carlos Charlin, Del Avión Rojo a la República Socialista, pp535-544 for an account of plots against Montero in which alessandristas were involved.
- (4) The Conservative was Miguel Cruchaga, Minister of Foreign Relations. The two Radical ministers controlled the Ministries of Justice, Education and Fomento. Arturo Alessandri Recuerdos de Gobierno III, pp6-8.
- (5) FOR FO 371/16568, A 5398/73/9. Dispatch to Sir John Simon from H. Chilton dated 5.7.1933.
- (6) Arturo Alessandri op. cit., III, p47.

Thwarted desire for cabinet office was not the only reason for the growth of opposition towards Alessandri inside the PR. Some Radicals objected to aspects of his administration's economic policies while still more were alarmed by his cavalier attitude towards civil rights and public liberties. By the end of 1933, a number of Radical congressmen were prepared to vote against his request for a six month extension of his special police powers.(7) In April 1934, Radical opposition to Alessandri was given an additional fillip by the results of two senatorial by-elections. In Antofagasta, Alessandri successfully used unscrupulous means to arrange the election of his Liberal son, Fernando, to a seat to which the PR felt it had a better claim; in Santiago, Marmaduke Grove defeated the government-sponsored candidate in a contest which was generally held to be a plebiscite on the government's record.(8) The first result offended by its naked nepotism and by its disregard for Radical aspirations, the second appeared to indicate that the tide of public opinion was running against the government. The PR therefore decided to present another ultimatum to Alessandri designed to force him to choose between Radical and right wing support. Alessandri rejected the ultimatum and the PR ordered its ministers to resign from cabinet but the party did not move into full-scale opposition. There were probably two basic reasons for this. Firstly, the PR wanted to protect the jobs of those Radicals who continued to serve in the

(7) Ricardo Donoso, op. cit., II, pl35.

(8) Ibid. ppl36-138.

administration in non-cabinet positions and, secondly, influential Radicals continued to feel that the party's interests would be better served by continued association with the Alessandri administration. Indeed, by early 1934, the PR was divided between the wealthier and more conservative Radicals who preferred the safety of an understanding with Alessandri and the right wing parties and younger, professionally-trained members who saw little hope of their ambitions for office being satisfied in the present situation and who preferred, instead, to seek an understanding with Alessandri's left wing opponents. Although the younger, left wing Radicals won a battle in April 1934 and succeeded in withdrawing the PR from cabinet, the struggle between the left and right wings was by no means over. Until 1937, Alessandri had some success in persuading Radicals to return to his cabinet, sometimes in direct disobedience to PR instructions.(9)

The PR was by no means the only party to experience difficulties in deciding on its attitude towards the Alessandri administration. A number of less important left and centre parties like the Partido Social Republicano(PSR) an off-shoot of the PR, and the Partido Democrático hovered between support and opposition, torn by their desire for office and by a growing dissatisfaction with the actions and policies of the government. Moreover, even right wing parties like the PC were occasionally moved to protest against what they saw as Alessandri's abuse of civil

(9) Peter G. Snow El Radicalismo Chileno (Santiago, 1972) pp85-86.

liberties.(10) Only one sector of political opinion appears to have avoided the quagmire of indecision - the extreme left. The PS, the PCCh and the Izquierda Comunista(IC) opposed Alessandri from the outset. However, none of these parties had the individual strength to mount an effective opposition to Alessandri either inside or outside Congress. Clearly, if the right wing policies of the government were to be resisted and its abuse of public liberties checked, some form of left wing unity had to be organised but neither the PS nor the PCCh were prepared to countenance any left wing unity which was not under its own control. Thus, when the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación General de Trabajadores invited the parties of the left to form a Frente Antifacista in August 1933, the PCCh joined only to make use of the opportunity to denounce other members as enemies of the proletariat.(11) A year later, Grove attempted to create a Frente Nacional de Defensa de la República with the help of the PS, the IC and dissident sectors of the Radical and Democrat parties. But this particular effort was denounced by the PCCh and came to nothing.(12) Similarly, attempts by both the PS and the PCCh to create a united trade union movement foundered on the obstacle of their mutual antagonism.(13) It was only in the final months of 1934, when Alessandri's harassment of his opponents reached new heights,

(10) For example, Conservatives protested against the destruction of the satirical magazine Topaze in 1938. Alessandri was furious. See Arturo Alessandri, op. cit., III, p91.

(11) Choque (Santiago) 8.8.1933.

(12) Unidad Obrera (Santiago) 1.7.1934.

(13) The PCCh rejected the PS's call to join a Frente Sindical Proletaria in 1934. Justicia 9.6.1934. The PS rejected PCCh unity calls made in 1933 and 1934. Justicia 5.1.1933; 9.6.1934.

that the PS began another attempt to organise a united front of left-wing parties. The decision of the government to resume payments on Chile's external debt provided the catalyst. In December 1934, the PS, the IC, the Democratic Party and the Radical Socialists (PRS) formed the Block de Izquierda (henceforth, Block) to combat this measure and, more generally, to defend public liberties.(14)

True to Third Period policy, the PCCh greeted the formation of the Block with hostility - it was yet another manifestation of class collaborationism which could only serve to strengthen the 'feudal bourgeois imperialist domination' of Chile.(15) However, by February 1935, although the PCCh maintained its critical attitude, its language in dealing with the Block had become markedly more restrained - a development which did not go unnoticed by the IC which began to predict a sharp change in the PCCh's policies.(16) In April 1935, the PCCh undertook that change by announcing that policies had to be attuned to changing world conditions and that in the light of the world offensive of fascism and the reactionary offensive in Chile, unity of action had become a 'vital necessity' for the Chilean working classes.(17) It is clear that the PCCh did not decide to change course because of its own independent deliberations.

Ever since the coming to power of Hitler in Germany in 1933, the problem of stemming the rise of fascism

(14) La Opinión 6.12.1934. The PRS had been formed by left-wing Radical dissidents in 1931.

(15) Frente Único 26.12.1934.

(16) Izquierda 27.3.1935.

(17) Frente Único 1st week of April, 1935.

had been the subject of some debate inside the Comintern. When the French Communist Party joined together with socialists in the early months of 1934 to prevent a threatened fascist take-over, that debate took on a new urgency.(18) By July 1934, a leading member of the Comintern, the Bulgarian Communist Georgi Dimitroff, was arguing that the dangers from fascism were now so great that attacks on social democrats should cease and 'united front from below' tactics should be dropped and trade union movements should be unified irrespective of whether communist parties managed to secure hegemony over them.(19) Although the main lines of Dimitroff's recommendations were later adopted by the Seventh Comintern Congress in August 1935, the third period policies which he questioned remained nominally intact until then. Nevertheless, during 1934, the French Communist Party and other European Communist parties were urged to seek united front alliances with socialist parties; the Latin American Communist parties, which met in conference at Montevideo in October 1934, also issued a call to form the 'widest possible anti-imperialist fronts'.(20) However, according to one recent account of that conference, the delegates were unable to 'completely overcome a sectarian attitude towards the national reformist and petty bourgeois parties'.(21) For this reason, and probably also because the leaders of the PCCh were loath to

(18) See D.R. Brower The New Jacobins - the French Communist Party and the Popular Front (Cornell, 1968) pp31-34. See, also, Fernando Claudin The Communist Movement from Comintern to Cominform (London, 1975) pp176-179.

(19) A.I. Sobolev et al., Outline History of the Communist International, pp375-378.

(20) Ibid. p368.

(21) Ibid.

fall into the error of right deviationism, the PCCh clung to the policies which it had only managed to digest with difficulty between 1930 and 1933, and attacked the Block with familiar invective.

Despite the re-orientation of Comintern policy during 1934 and the signs of a partial re-adjustment in the PCCh's attitude towards other left-wing parties in the early months of 1935, the call for united action which the PCCh made in April 1935 appears to have been the direct result of the arrival in Chile of a special Comintern team led by the Peruvian Communist, Eudocio Ravines.(22) According to Ravines, two countries in Latin America, Chile and Brazil, had been selected to test two variants of the popular front strategy which was later adopted by the Seventh Comintern Congress. The basic objective in both countries was to organise the broadest united front of democratic forces that was possible but, once this had been achieved, the Brazilian Communists were to seize power through force while the PCCh was to come to power through the normal means afforded by electoral processes. Ravines states that the differences in tactics for Brazil and Chile was the product of divergences between two Comintern leaders, Manuilsky and Dimitroff - the former maintaining that outside the developed countries of Europe, popular fronts could not achieve power except through armed insurrection.(23)

(22) The team included Ricardo Martínez, a Venezuelan trade union expert, Federico Glaufbauf, an Austrian specialist in ideological training, Manuel Cazón, a German, Kazanov, a Russian and Marcucci, an Italian youth expert. Eudocio Ravines La Gran Estafa (Santiago, 1954) p312.

(23) Ibid. p287. D.R. Brower op. cit., p82.

Whatever the precise reasons for the different tactics used in Brazil and Chile - and it is worth noting that the adoption of insurrectionary tactics for Brazil also obeyed the particular experience of the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party, ex-army officer Luis Carlos Prestes - the basic strategy remained the same in both cases.(24)

Although there was no real fascist threat in Chile at the time (the local Nazi Party, the Movimiento Nacional Socialista(MNS) being noisy but weak), by April 1935 conditions did seem propitious for the organisation of left-wing unity as a preliminary to the formation of a popular front coalition.(25) Important left-wing parties were already grouped together in the Block and Alessandri's actions continued to give grounds for fears that democracy was in danger. Indeed, the government's brutal and over-energetic repression of a national rail strike in January 1935 outraged not only the left but also the PR and even some members of right-wing parties and in March 1935, they joined together in Congress in an unsuccessful effort to impeach the Minister of the Interior.(26) Nevertheless, formidable obstacles still remained to the creation of united action

(24) Prestes was an Army Engineer who leaped to world fame in the mid-1920s by leading a revolutionary column of soldiers through the Brazilian jungle. Although not a Communist at the time, he later became leader of the Brazilian Communist Party.

(25) The MNS was founded in 1932 by Jorge González von Marées and others. Although it gained some notoriety through street battles with Communists and Socialists in the mid-1930s, it always claimed to be socialist as well as nationalist and in 1938 declared itself to be anti-imperialist. (Claridad, 27.5.1938). After the abortive coup of September 1938 (see below, p197) it supported the Popular Front candidate in the October 1938 presidential elections.

(26) Ricardo Donoso op. cit., II, pp155-159. 56 Congressmen voted for impeachment and 76 voted against.

between the PCCh and other parties of the left. The PS and the IC harboured deep resentments and antagonisms towards the PCCh while, according to Ravines, there was considerable resistance to the new tactics inside the PCCh itself.(27)

The first step which the PCCh took towards organising unity of action with the left was to suggest to the Block that joint May Day celebrations be held, a suggestion which the Block parties rejected unanimously.(28) At the same time, the PCCh also mooted its own incorporation into the Block in a letter to Oscar Schnake, the Secretary General of the PS.(29) Schnake replied with a scathing letter in which he congratulated the PCCh for finally recognising that its tactics in recent years had been mistaken but regretted that this change of course had only come about because of fresh orders from abroad. Before agreeing to united action, Schnake demanded that the PCCh cease its attempts to win over the lower echelons of the PS to the idea of united action behind the backs of the Socialist leaders and that it stop its efforts to sow intrigue inside the PS.(30) Schnake also indicated that the PCCh's conduct in an approaching Congress of Trade Union Unity would be carefully scrutinised for evidence of the Communists' good intentions.(31) The PCCh's first effort to join the Block, then, was rebuffed - the nominal reason on this occasion being that it was against Block

(27) Eudocio Ravines op. cit. p313, 321. Also, see below p204.

(28) Izquierda 15.5.1935.

(29) Frente Unico 2nd week of May, 1935.

(30) Oscar Schnake Política Socialista (Santiago, 1938) pp85-89.

(31) Ibid.

policy to admit fractions of the same party. As the IC newspaper Izquierda reported with some glee, the Block advised the PCCh to seek an accommodation with the IC before applying for admission again.(32)

Undeterred by the rebuffs it received in May 1935, the PCCh persisted in its efforts to form a united front with the PS. However, it soon became clear that the PCCh was not prepared to make the concessions of the type demanded by Schnake. At the Congress of Trade Union Unity held in Valparaíso in June 1935, the PCCh resorted to manipulations of card votes and the fabrication of paper trade unions in a successful attempt to prevent the Socialist-dominated Confederación Nacional de Sindicales Legales(CNSL) from unifying the trade union movement under its own auspices.(33) If the PCCh's conduct on that occasion did nothing to win the PS's confidence, relations between them became even cooler when it became clear that the PCCh's new tactics went beyond unity of action of the left. In July 1935, at the funeral of the flamboyant Radical Senator for Santiago, Pedro León Ugalde, the PCCh launched its historic call for a Popular Front which would unite all democratic forces in the struggle against reaction and imperialism.(34) While the PCCh's attempts to join the Block represented a retreat from Third Period extremism, its call for a popular front signified a sharp turn to the right and opened the door, at least as far as the PCCh was concerned, to cooperation

(32) Izquierda 15.5.1935.

(33) See La Opinión 18.7.1935 and Consigna 8.6.1935 for Socialist descriptions of the PCCh's tactics at this Congress.

(34) La Opinión 8.7.1935.

with parties of the centre and, in particular, with the PR. The initial reactions of the major Block parties were not favourable. The IC denounced the new formula as another Stalinist attempt to sell out the proletariat and declared that the PCCh was passing from the 'plantations of rabid stridentism to the swamps of class collaborationism'.(35) The PS, for its part, insisted that the Block was the vehicle for the struggle against Alessandri and saw no need for the creation of a new organisation along popular front lines. Moreover, the PS expressed serious doubts as to whether the PR, clearly divided between those who continued to collaborate with Alessandri and those who did not, could be incorporated into an alliance of the left.(36)

Despite the hostility and opposition of the PS and the IC towards the popular front idea, the PCCh pressed ahead with its efforts. The by-election to fill the Senate seat left vacant by Pedro León Ugalde's death gave the PCCh the opportunity to demonstrate Popular Front tactics in practice. The PCCh nominated a non-communist, Juan Luis Mery, as its candidate and invited the other left wing and centre parties to support him. The choice of Mery as candidate was particularly shrewd since he was a member of a Block party (the Partido Radical Socialista), a known ibañista, director of La Opinión (the principal opposition newspaper) and on the run from the police who were trying to serve an exile order on him. The PS, which had planned

(35) Izquierda 24.7.1935. Article anon. 'Bajo las banderas de Juan Antonio'.

(36) Consigna 3.8.1935.

to present Oscar Schnake as its candidate in the by-election, was thus placed in an awkward position. Refusal to support Mery would lay the PS open to the charge that it was not prepared to make the slightest self-sacrifice in the cause of left-wing unity, contrasting unfavourably with the PCCh which, for all its past sectarianism, was now clearly prepared to mend its ways. Moreover, refusal to support Mery might well have caused the PRS to leave the Block, beginning the process of disintegration which had characterised previous efforts at left-wing unity. The PS decided to drop Schnake's candidacy and to support Mery - not, however, without signs of bad grace.(37) The PR, for its part, had originally intended to present its most prominent left-wing leader, Juan Antonio Ríos, as its candidate in the by-election but since the left-wing Radicals had been looking for an alliance with the parties of the left for some time, the PR, too, was prevailed upon to drop Ríos' candidacy and support Mery.(38) The by-election was finally fought between Mery and the government-sponsored candidate Arturo Ureta Echazarreta, and was seen by both sides as a test of the government's popularity. In the event, Ureta won but by such a narrow margin that the result was seen as a moral victory for the left and a defeat for the

(37) The Socialist newspaper Consigna was very cool towards Mery and the PCCh claimed that some Socialists boycotted his candidacy. Frente Único 1st week of August, 1935.

(38). Eudocio Ravines op. cit. p319. See also, FOR FO/371/18664 A 6529/11/9 dispatch Charles Bentinck to Sir John Simon dated 15.7.1935.

government.(39)

In the same month that the PCCh launched its call for a Popular Front, the Comintern was in the process of formally adopting popular front policies at its Seventh World Congress in Moscow. Interestingly enough, the analysis of world economic conditions which underpinned the new policies was not dissimilar to that which had been used to support Third Period policies. The capitalist world was 'entering a period of sharp clashes as a result of the internal and external contradictions of capitalism'.(40) However, on this occasion, the approaching economic and political crises were seen to favour the rise of fascism rather than the rapid development of the revolutionary struggle. In order to check this threat, the communist parties were instructed to form broad popular fronts of all parties and organisations which were interested in defending bourgeois democracy - now, for all its faults, recognised as being preferable to fascism. The communist parties were directed, therefore, to cooperate with the recently despised social democrats and reformists in coalitions of trade unions and political parties. In colonial countries or semi-colonial and dependent countries like Chile, the principal enemy was not fascism so much as imperialism. The task in those countries was to form wide anti-imperialist fronts and work for the installation of national popular revolutionary governments which, once in office, would

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- (39) Ureta Echazarreta polled 29,437 votes to Mery's 28,134. According to the British Ambassador, Mery lost because of massive bribery and manipulation of the electoral roll. FOR FO 371/18664 A 7289/11/9 despatch Bentinck to Simon, dated 12.8.1935.
- (40) See, Jane Degras The Communist International 1919-1943 (3 vols., London, 1960) III, p369.

undertake fundamental reforms.(41) If conditions permitted, a single mass revolutionary party was to be created on the basis of unity between the socialists and the communists.(42) With regard to themselves, the communist parties were exhorted to dispense with 'self-satisfied sectarianism' which seriously retarded growth and warned against right opportunism which tended to gloss over the differences between communist and other political parties.(43)

Although the PCCh's initial presentations of the Popular Front strategy emphasised that it was not a retreat from revolutionary principles but simply the continuation of the revolutionary struggle by means better suited to prevailing circumstances, and although the PCCh evidently had some success in winning individual Socialists over to the Front idea, the PS and IC leaderships remained unconvinced of the need for a new popular front coalition and they continued to resist Communist efforts to join the Block. In November 1935, the PCCh claimed that an application to join the Block, made on its behalf by the PRS, was turned down because it was not made in writing and that a subsequent written application was rejected after an inordinate delay - even though all the Block parties had publicly agreed to the admission of the PCCh.(44)

If the PS and the IC proved intransigent, the Popular Front idea was gaining acceptance elsewhere. In

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- (41) International Press Correspondence, Vienna and London, Vol.15, No.34, 10.8.1935.
(42) Ibid.
(43) Ibid.
(44) Frente Unico, 2nd weeks of September, October, November, 1935.

particular, left-wing Radicals were attracted by the idea while other Block parties, like the PRS and the Partido Democrático which did not share the PS's and the IC's deep antagonism towards the PCCh was also quick to see the advantages of a broader coalition.(45) However, if the PCCh was making some progress in its efforts to gain acceptance for the Popular Front idea, it was the pressure of events rather than Communist tactical skills which finally precipitated the formation of the Popular Front in March 1936. Despite the signs that the left and the PR were moving towards cooperation, the Alessandri government continued to give grounds for fears that democracy was in danger. In September 1935, the government attempted to choke off one critical voice by buying shares in the Radical newspaper, La Hora.(46) In the following month, the authorities claimed to have discovered another revolutionary plot, banished a number of politicians to the provinces and started proceedings designed to deprive Grove of his parliamentary privilege as a prelude to prosecution.(47) In November, the Minister of the Interior, ordered Intendentes not to meet with representatives of trade union confederations (organisations which were technically illegal) - an action which caused all of the working class to protest.(48) More important than this, however, was the debate on the Ross Calder agreement which raged in Congress during late 1935 and 1936. The passions aroused by this agreement by which the government dropped charges of tax evasion against

(45) Eudocio Ravines, op. cit. p316.

(46) Consigna 14.9.1935.

(47) Ibid. 26.10.1935.

(48) Ibid. 30.11.1935.

the US-owned Compañía Chilena de Electricidad in exchange for shares in the company, drove a further wedge between Alessandri and his Radical and left-wing opponents.(49) These events, together with a growing pressure inside the party in favour of the Popular Front idea, led the PS to approve a resolution calling for the amplification of the Block at a National Congress in January 1936.(50) But, although it was decided to expand the Block, the question of forming a Popular Front coalition was specifically avoided and at the same Congress, the PCCh's most bitter enemies, the IC, were given permission to join the PS on an individual basis. Only after a fresh series of hostile acts by the Alessandri administration was resistance in both the PR and the PS overcome. Over-reacting to a national rail strike in February 1936, Alessandri declared a state of siege, closed La Hora and La Opinión, discovered another revolutionary plot and arrested a number of prominent ibañistas, including Juan Antonio Ríos, the leader of the left-wing Radicals.(51) In response, the Asamblea Radical of Santiago, the most important Radical regional organisation in the country, approved with enthusiasm a resolution calling for the formation of a Popular Front - a resolution presented by the Radical, Justiniano Sotomayor but evidently prepared and typed by Contreras Labarca and Marcos Chamudes.(52) In the following month, March 1936, the Popular Front came into being.(53)

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- (49) Ricardo Donoso op. cit., II, pp179-180.
(50) J.C. Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, pp124-7.
(51) Ricardo Donoso op. cit., II, pp182-183.
(52) Interview with Marcos Chamudes, Santiago, 1969.
(53) Peter C. Snow, op. cit. p82.

The formation of the Popular Front in March 1936 was a significant victory for the PCCh and its new tactics but the loyalties of its two most important members, the PR and the PS were by no means totally secure and at times the PCCh was hard pressed to maintain the unity of the coalition which it had put so much effort into creating.

Resistance to the Popular Front inside the PR came essentially from right-wing Radicals who disliked association with the PCCh and the Left in general, who had serious doubts as to the Front's effectiveness as an electoral coalition and who believed that the PR would be better served by continued association with the Alessandri administration. During 1936, then, the loyalties of the PR to the Front fluctuated in accordance with the results of congressional by-elections and in response to various attempts by Alessandri to persuade the PR to return to cabinet. Indeed, by the end of that year, the division between frentistas and anti-frentistas inside the PR had assumed serious proportions. Three Radicals took up cabinet seats without the PR's permission and were supported in their indiscipline by the Radical senators.(54) For their part, the Radical frentistas had been strengthened by a solid vote of provincial organisations in support of the Front and by the passage of a new internal security law through Congress which was seen by many to be a further proof of Alessandri's dictatorial intentions.(55) By December 1936, then, the unity of

(54) La Hora 27.10.1936; 2.12.1936.

(55) In December 1936, 13 Radical provincial organisations voted for the Popular Front, 6 voted against and 4 abstained. Ibid. 21.12.1936.

the PR and its future policy towards the Popular Front appeared to rest on the outcome of the March 1937 Congressional elections, elections in which the local PR organisations had been given a free hand to pact or not with the Popular Front parties. In the event, the results of the March 1937 congressional elections were not as clear cut as either the frentistas or anti-frentistas would have wished. Although the PR polled 76,941 votes as compared with 59,413 in the last general election in 1932, its share of total votes cast only increased from 18.2% to 18.7% while the number of members it elected to the Chamber of Deputies actually fell from 34 to 29.(56) Although the Radical frentistas argued that the PR lost precisely in those constituencies where it did not pact with the Front and although they pointed to the considerable gains the left-wing parties had made in those elections, Radical anti-frentistas continued to serve in Alessandri's cabinet.(57) In May 1937, the PR convened an Extraordinary Convention to decide the issue once and for all. That Convention gave an overwhelming vote in favour of continued participation in the Front, instructed the Radical ministers to resign on pain of expulsion and made it clear that the PR expected Popular Front support for its presidential candidate in the presidential elections scheduled for October 1938.(58) And it was this last factor, rather than any freshly acquired sense of discipline that moved the Radical ministers to comply with

(56) Germán Urzúa Valenzuela op. cit., p73, p87.

(57) La Hora 23.3.1937.

(58) Ibid. 16.5.1937; 17.5.1937.

Convention instructions and resign from office. By May 1937, the problem of who was to become Chile's next President had assumed some urgency. It also seemed increasingly likely that Gustavo Ross, Alessandri's Minister of Finance, a man celebrated for his tough political attitudes and his almost pathological dislike of the PR, would be the candidate of the Right and, as such, would receive the support of the government machine.(59) In the light of this probability, most conservative Radicals no longer saw any advantage in continued participation in Alessandri's cabinets and recognised that if one of their number was to be Chile's next President, they would have to accept the Popular Front in line with majority opinion inside the PR. Thus, after May 1937, the struggle inside the PR shifted away from the question of Radical membership of the Front and towards the contest for the PR's presidential nomination. The principal contenders were Juan Antonio Ríos, the leader of the Radical frentistas, and Pedro Aguirre Cerda, a much-respected conservative Radical who, although one of the more important Radical anti-frentistas, had not occupied a front line

(59) Gustavo Ross was a financier and speculator who had made a fortune on the Paris Stock Exchange, before becoming active in Chilean politics. As Alessandri's Finance Minister between 1933 and 1937, he successfully pursued fiscal policies which were, perhaps, unavoidably unpopular with the Left. Although something of an economic nationalist, as the Ross Calder agreement demonstrated (see above, page 182) he sometimes gave voice to savagely anti-democratic and anti-popular sentiments advocating, amongst other measures, massive white immigration and a 'touch of the lash' for the workers. FOR FO 371/18665 A 9193/11/9. dispatch from Bentinck to Anthony Eden, dated 25.10.1935. Ricardo Donoso op. cit., II, pl66; the Communists dubbed him 'the last pirate of the Pacific'.

position in the recent internal struggles.(60) In November 1937, the PR held an internal election to decide between the two and Aguirre Cerda won by 5,611 votes to 4,091.(61) The victory of Aguirre Cerda strengthened the loyalty of the conservative Radicals to the Popular Front; Ríos, however, did not accept his defeat with good grace and embarked on a campaign to outflank Aguirre Cerda by advocating the presidential candidacy of General Carlos Ibáñez to his fellow Radicals.(62)

The PCCh's attitude towards the PR and its internal struggles was dictated by the paramount need to keep the PR inside the Popular Front. To this end, the PCCh played upon the PR's presidential ambitions, did as much as it could to support the frentistas in their struggle to control the PR and tried to neutralise the centre and combat the right-wing Radicals.(63) In addition, the PCCh progressively diluted the programme of revolutionary change which it first suggested as the basis for the Popular Front coalition. Thus, although the PCCh programme of August 1935 had called for the confiscation of latifundia and the lands of the

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- (60) The political differences between Aguirre Cerda and Ríos were slight for all that they led the right and left wings of the PR. Indeed, personal styles, backgrounds and their ambition to become Chile's next President separated them more than issues and, ironically enough, the 'right wing' Aguirre Cerda proved to be a more socially aware and popular President than the 'left wing' Ríos. See Florencio Durán Bernalles El Partido Radical (Santiago, 1958) for a description of the careers and achievements of both.
- (61) La Hora 29.11.1937.
- (62) Ibid. 8.1.1938. See also article by Wilfredo Mayorga Ercilla, No.1619, 16.6.1966.
- (63) See, article by Contreras Labarca, Principios No.120, July-August 1967 entitled 'La Gran Experiencia del Frente Popular', p33.

Church, for the nationalisation of the important public service industries and the return of lands stolen from the Indians, these proposals were soon dropped.(64) By early 1937, the PCCh was proposing a programme which had no direct reference to the confiscation of land or nationalisation (except for those foreign-owned industries which refused to comply with Chilean law) and which talked in more moderate terms of the subordination of foreign capital to national interests and of the need to protect and aid national agriculture and industry.(65)

Pursuing its policy towards the PR, the PCCh made it clear that it was not categorically opposed to Radicals participating in Alessandri's cabinets, provided such participation was the basis of a clear programme which brought benefits to the masses.(66) Similarly, although the PCCh attacked Radical anti-frentistas it was careful to reserve its most virulent invective for those Radicals who had openly broken Radical discipline. Moreover, although the PCCh supported Ríos in the struggle for the PR's presidential nomination, it did so without great enthusiasm and without vicious attacks on his rival. Clearly if the price of the PR's loyalty to the Popular Front was the acceptance of leadership by conservative Radicals, it was a price the PCCh was prepared to pay.

The other major Popular Front party, the PS, had a

(64) Frente Unico, last week of August, 1935.

(65) Frente Popular 23.1.1937.

(66) Ibid. 23.5.1936; 17.6.193 (Although the Communist Frente Popular began publication in September 1936, it was preceded by a publication of the same name which included Radicals, Socialists and Communists on its editorial board.)

rather different attitude towards the coalition. Although the PS, like the PR, had its frentistas and anti-frentistas most of the Socialist leaders were never more than lukewarm towards the Popular Front. The PS, after all, had created the Block as a vehicle for the struggle against Alessandri and saw no need for a new coalition, particularly one in which the PS was unlikely to have the deciding voice. Moreover, most Socialist leaders shared the fears of the anti-frentistas that the Front would lead the PS into a morass of reformism and that it would only serve to revive the flagging fortunes of its most conservative member, the PR.(67) Since the PS entertained such reservations, why then did it agree to join the Front? First, because Alessandri continued to give grounds for fears that democracy was in danger. Secondly, because the Socialists regarded the Front as essentially an amplification of the Block, a declared objective of the PS before the formation of the Front, and they could find no good reason for opposing the form which that expansion finally took.(68) Third, because the Front had been accepted by other Block parties as well as by some Socialists and to ignore these facts would have been to run the risk of isolation and fractionalisation. Fourthly, the PS, like other parties which joined the coalition, was influenced by the world battle then raging between fascism and democracy. Finally, the Popular Front offered some immediate advantages in the electoral and trade union fields as well as the possibility of the Front's support for the PS's

(67) Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, pl25.

(68) Consigna 31.8.1935.

own presidential candidate, Marmaduke Grove.(69)

In effect, then, the PS joined and remained in the Popular Front because it could offer no realistic alternative and because, even at worst, it could expect to receive some concrete advantages. Nevertheless, the PS's loyalty to the Front was, at times, placed under great strains, not by the machinations of Alessandri but by the activities and policies of the PCCh. Leaving aside, for the moment, the struggles between the PS and the PCCh in the trade union movement and the squabbles which occurred during various election campaigns, three areas in particular strained their relations between 1936 and 1938. These revolved around the PCCh's efforts to create a single revolutionary party in Chile, a Partido Único, its attempts to broaden the Popular Front by incorporating new allies and the question of who was to be the Front's presidential candidate.

The creation of a Partido Único had been one of the central objectives of the Popular Front strategy as outlined by Dimitroff at the Seventh Comintern Congress. Dimitroff urged the formation of a single revolutionary party on the basis of unity between socialists and communists provided that the socialists agreed on the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat and accepted the organisational principles of

(69) The advantages included a cessation of hostilities with the PCCh in the trade union movement, Communist cooperation in the creation of a unified trade union movement and key posts in that new organisation. Electoral help from the Front enabled the PS to elect 19 Deputies and 4 Senators in 1937, in contrast to the 5 Deputies the new socialist parties had elected in 1932, prior to the PS's foundation.

of democratic centralism - amongst other conditions.(70)

The PCCh began its campaign for the formation of the Partido Único in late 1936 by approaching the PS as well as other frentistas parties. However, the PS found the PCCh's proposals vague and pointless; there was no need for a revolutionary Partido Único since the PS itself fulfilled that function and, moreover, while the PCCh still belonged to the Comintern, the formation of such a party was clearly impossible.(71) Yet despite the PS's hostility to the idea and its formal rejection of it at a National Party Congress, held in Talca in May 1937, the PCCh continued its agitation for the Partido Único.(72)

The questions of broadening the Front and of who was to be the coalition's presidential candidate were inter-related since the PCCh used the carrot of the presidential nomination to attract new allies to the Front. Perhaps its most controversial use of this strategem was in connection with ex-President Ibáñez, the PCCh's old arch-enemy. In the early months of 1937, the PCCh began to make conciliatory overtures towards Ibáñez and later in that year, publicly declared that it was prepared to support Ibáñez for the Presidency provided he accepted the Front's programme, broke his links with reaction and proved to be acceptable to the other frentistas parties.(73) Although, at first sight, the PCCh's approaches to Ibáñez might seem strange, there

(70) International Press Correspondence Vol.15, No.34
10.8.1935.

(71) Consigna 27.2.1937; 27.3.1937.

(72) Ibid. 22.5.1937.

(73) Frente Popular 2.2.1937; 10.11.1937.

were compelling reasons for its action. Firstly, since all the major frentista parties, except the PCCh, included a more or less powerful ibañista current amongst their members, it was important to prevent Ibáñez from presenting himself as an independent presidential candidate since this would place a severe strain on their loyalties. Secondly, it became increasingly clear, especially after the municipal elections of April 1938, that ibañista parties outside the coalition - the Unión Socialista and the MNS - held the electoral balance between the Front parties and their right-wing opponents.(74) Third, the PCCh did not view either of the probable Front presidential candidates who had emerged by the end of 1937, with much enthusiasm. The PCCh doubted that the Socialist Grove would have much appeal outside the PS and the working classes, while the Radical, Aguirre Cerda, was compromised, so far as the PCCh was concerned, by his long association with governments of the centre and by his ties with reaction.(75) Ibáñez, on the other hand, had led a reforming administration, whatever his other sins, and he could count on support from many different sectors of Chilean society. Moreover, Ibáñez was thought to be personally better suited to deal with the abrasive challenge of the candidate of the Right, Gustavo Ross.(76) Apart from these

(74) According to Claridad, 14.7.1938, the parties of the Right polled 187,910 votes in the April 1938 municipal elections while frentista parties polled 161,950. The Unión Socialista and MNS held the balance with 26,037 votes. See below, pp194-195, for the origins of the Unión Socialista.

(75) Frente Popular 10.11.1937.

(76) Article by Wilfredo Mayorga in Ercilla, No.1619, 15.6.1966.

more or less pragmatic reasons, the PCCh was also influenced by theoretical considerations. It was part and parcel of the Popular Front strategy to isolate the Right by drawing all the popular forces within the Front almost regardless of their ideology and, furthermore, communist parties in other parts of the world like China and Cuba had supported 'popular military governments' in the struggle against imperialism and fascism.(77)

Although, according to one source, Oscar Schnake (the Socialist Secretary General) entered into secret negotiations with Ibáñez's electoral committee, in public the PS reacted angrily to the PCCh's approaches towards Ibáñez and vehemently rejected the idea that the Unión Socialista, an ibañista party created by PS dissidents, should enter the Front.(78) By April 1938 when the frentista parties met to select the Front's presidential candidate, negotiations between Schnake and Ibáñez had evidently broken down and the PS put up a vigorous struggle on Grove's behalf. In the event, however, Aguirre Cerda won the nomination largely because the PCCh abstained after the first round of voting, an action which prevented either candidate from gaining the necessary majority, thus forcing the PS to choose between acquiescing in Aguirre Cerda's selection or taking the responsibility for breaking the Front. In a dramatic gesture, Grove sacrificed his personal ambition in the cause of unity and withdrew his candidacy and the PS levelled passionate

(77) See below, page 205.

(78) Consigna 2.11.1937; Claridad 24.2.1938, 27.2.1938.

charges of betrayal against the PCCh.(79) Neither Grove's gesture nor the charges of treachery were entirely sincere. Once the PS had discarded the idea of supporting Ibañez, there was no real alternative to the Aguirre Cerda candidacy since the Front would need the whole-hearted support of the PR if it was to win the October 1938 elections - support which would not have been forthcoming had Aguirre Cerda not been selected. Indeed, according to some sources, Schnake had often declared that the Grove candidacy had no real chance of success.(80) Moreover, while the PS accused the PCCh of treachery, and while in the past the PCCh had given the PS some grounds to hope for Communist support, by early 1938 relations between the two parties were so cool that the PS would have been extremely naive if it had sincerely believed that that support would be forthcoming. If this was the case, why did the PS put up such a vigorous struggle on behalf of Grove at the Convention? Firstly, because it was necessary to show the rank and file Socialist that all reasonable efforts had been made to secure the nomination for Grove - a man of great personal popularity inside the PS. Second, and more important, it was a useful way of impressing on the PR its indebtedness to the PS - an indebtedness which could be converted into concrete rewards should Aguirre Cerda win the election. Finally, it gave the PS the opportunity to score some useful political points

(79) Claridad 21.4.1938.

(80) See, La Opinión 4.11.1937 for this allegation which, although made anonymously, probably came from a Socialist dissident. See also, Wilfredo Mayorga's article 'Las intrigas electorales del 1938' in Ercilla, No.1619, June 1966.

against the PCCh.

Essentially, however, it was not the PCCh's policies in themselves which produced heated reactions from the PS but rather the methods which the PCCh used to gain the acceptance of those policies inside the PS. Broadly speaking, the PCCh methods in relation to the PS were twofold; on the one hand it tried to win individual Socialists to its viewpoint, regardless of whether or not the CC PS had pronounced on the matter in question, and, on the other, it attacked any opponents of its policies inside the PS as Trotskyists. Thus, even as the PCCh began its approaches to the PS leadership for unity of action in early 1935, it wooed members of local PS organisations and attempted to penetrate the PS with cells.(81) Despite the PS's protests, the PCCh continued to use these methods with some success. In May 1937, Socialist deputy-elect Oscar Baeza was expelled from the PS, according to his own account because he was an advocate of the Partido Único, and he was promptly incorporated into the PCCh.(82) In October 1937, a group of Socialists were expelled for creating a Partido Único (which they called the Partido Nacional Revolucionario) and for advocating the candidacy of Ibáñez, activities in which they were encouraged, according to the PS, by the PCCh.(83) For similar reasons, some 200 Socialists, including two deputies (Ricardo Latcham

(81) Frente Único, last week of February, 1935.

(82) Frente Popular 9.5.1937. The PS claimed, however, that Baeza was expelled for having appointed an expelled Socialist to direct his election campaign, for denigrating the CC PS and for revealing the contents of secret PS Congress sessions to outsiders. Ibid. 12.5.1937.

(83) Consigna 23.10.1937.

and Amaro Castro), were expelled the following month; this event led to the formation of a new party, Unión Socialista, which rapidly declared itself in favour of the presidential candidacy of Ibáñez.(84) Although the PCCh was cool towards the emergence of the Unión Socialista because it did not declare promptly for the Popular Front, there is some reason to believe that at least one of its leaders, Ricardo Latcham, had close links with the PCCh. Latcham publicly blamed his difficulties inside the PS on his enthusiastic frentismo, which had earned him the hostility of Schnake, and also on his efforts to prevent IC members and Trotskyists from entering the PS - both activities of which the PCCh whole-heartedly approved.(85) Furthermore, Latcham praised PCCh leaders and declared that one of his principal objectives was 'sincere and loyal unity with the PCCh'.(86)

The PS also objected strongly to the PCCh's attacks on 'Trotskyists' within the PS, that is, those Socialists who did not agree with the PCCh's policies - both because it implied that the PS took orders from the Fourth International just as the Communists took theirs from the Third and because they saw it as an attempt to foment disunity inside the PS. The PS declared that it alone decided its policies and that there was no Trotskyist fraction acting inside the party.(87) Nevertheless, it seems to be clear that anti-frentismo inside the PS was strengthened by the influx of IC members who continued to attack the Popular Front and press for

(84) Ibid. 13.11.1937.

(85) La Opinión 7.1.1937; Frente Popular, Iquique, 12.12.1937.

(86) Frente Popular, Iquique, 12.12.1937.

(87) Claridad 21.4.1938.

the creation of a Frente Proletaria, a coalition composed only of working class parties.

After the selection of Aguirre Cerda as the Front's presidential candidate, negotiations between the ibañista coalition (the Alianza Popular Libertadora -APL) and the Front reached a temporary deadlock but soon started up again. Indeed, during April and May 1938 Alessandri's activities almost managed to bring about a unity of action between the two coalitions which negotiation had failed to achieve. His refusal to meet with frentista congressmen to discuss guarantees for the approaching presidential elections led the Unión Socialista to agree to united action with the Front and, a little later, after police had brutally man-handled congressmen during an incident in which the MNS leader, González von Marées, fired a pistol shot inside the Chamber as Alessandri was formally opening the ordinary sessions of Congress, the Front, the Unión Socialista and the MNS agreed on united action.(88) However, on the 4th June, Ibáñez formally announced his candidacy for the presidency and the Front newspapers began to make all-out attacks on him. At the same time, it appears that Radical and Communist leaders continued to have secret negotiations with Ibáñez until September 1938 when events intervened once again to solve the problem.(89) On September 5th, the MNS tried to pre-empt the presidential elections by launching a coup in favour of Ibáñez - evidently without his express consent - and seized public buildings within a stone's throw of the Presidential

(88) Frente Popular 29.4.1938; Claridad 27.5.1938

(89) Rene Montero Moreno Confesiones Políticas (Santiago, 1959)p101 .

Palace.(90) The Army, however, did not respond as the golpistas had hoped and they were rounded up by the police and slaughtered - allegedly on Alessandri's orders.(91) Although one policeman had been murdered in the process of the attempted coup, the massacre of sixty one Nazis (many of them young middle class students) shocked the nation and eventually forced Ibáñez to withdraw from the presidential contest. From gaol, González von Marées instructed the MNS to vote for Aguirre Cerda, an instruction which was endorsed a few days later by the APL.(92) As a result, Aguirre Cerda defeated Ross by 222,720 votes to 218,609.(93)

Although accident played almost as great a role as design in Aguirre Cerda's victory, it was the crowning triumph for the Front strategy which had already given the PCCh - and the PS - impressive gains in the congressional elections of March 1937 and the municipal elections of April 1938.(94) But the electoral achievements of the Popular Front strategy were not won in isolation from successes in other directions. A prime objective of the Front strategy was the creation of a unified trade union movement on the basis of the Communist FOCh, the Socialist CNSL and the Anarchist CGT. Although both the PS and the PCCh had

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- (90) Ibáñez apparently helped to plan the coup but vacillated over putting it into action. See, article by H.E. Bicheno 'Anti-Parliamentary themes in Chilean History; 1920-1970' in K. Medhurst (ED.) Allende's Chile (London, 1972) p123.
- (91) See Ricardo Donoso, op. cit., II, pp258-261.
- (92) Maria Infante Barros Testigos del treinta y ocho
- (93) Ibid. p90.
- (94) See below, page 212, for the PCCh's electoral gains.

made calls for trade union unity during 1933 and 1934, neither party had been prepared to make significant concessions to achieve it. By early 1935, however, conditions had changed; inside the CNSL there was considerable disillusion with legal unionism which on a number of occasions had been disregarded or manipulated by the authorities to favour the employers while, for its part, the FOCh was now prepared to accept legal unionism and to campaign for its reform rather than its abolition.(95) Despite the PCCh's change of heart, it was not prepared to capitulate tamely to the ambitions of the CNSL and accept its hegemony in a unified trade union movement. For that reason, the FOCh successfully used rather dubious tactics to defeat the CNSL's unity formula at the June 1935 Trade Union Unity Congress and managed to have its own formula adopted. Not surprisingly, relations between Communist and Socialist trade unionists deteriorated after that Congress and it was not until July 1936 that they agreed to form a Frente Único Sindical which in December of that year finally laid the basis of a unified trade union movement - the Confederación de Trabajadores de Chile(CTCh). Although the FOCh was forced to accept the dominance of the Socialists on the new Confederation's National Executive Committee (CDN) as the price of unity, in the process of hard-fought negotiations, they secured for themselves four of the thirteen CDN seats, the sub-Secretary Generalship and the promise of the Secretary Generalship when the Socialist, Juan Díaz Martínez, had completed his

(95) See, La Opinión 11.2.1935 for criticisms of legal unionism by CNSL members.

term of office.(96) Essentially though, it was political pressure from the PS and the PCCh on their trade union supporters which was the deciding factor in the creation of the CTCh, rather than any agreement between the FOCh and the CNSL. Indeed, the political nature of the CTCh was clearly illustrated by its concern with the struggle against fascism and its membership of the Popular Front.(97)

Between 1936 and 1938, relations between the Communists and the Socialists in the CTCh were never very cordial although it was not until 1939 that a major row developed over the election of a new CDN and seriously threatened the unity of the confederation.(98) In the early years, Socialist and Communist trade unionists were encouraged by their respective political leadership to keep their animosities in check and, by operating independently as far as possible and by directing their energies towards recruiting non-aligned workers and creating new unions, they achieved an uneasy modus vivendi.(99) However, in some areas they found that they could cooperate fruitfully. The CTCh launched campaigns for the reform of certain aspects of trade union law, for the reduction of the cost of living and against the new internal security law and collected funds for the Spanish Republicans.(100)

(96) CTCh, Santiago, 10.9.1943.

(97) Alan Angell, op. cit. p107.

(98) Frente Popular 7.8.1939.

(99) The efforts of the PCCh and PS to create new unions had considerable success. Between 1936 and 1938, the total number of legal unions grew from 670 to 932 and the total number of members from 84,699 to 125,978. Estadística Chilena June 1947, p100.

(100) Frente Popular 6.1.1937; 15.3.1937; 9.4.1937; 7.7.1937.

The advent of the Popular Front strategy not only facilitated the creation of a unified trade union movement but it also altered the PCCh's attitude towards strike actions. During the Third Period, the PCCh had encouraged the workers to launch strike actions at every conceivable opportunity in order to accelerate the revolutionary process. Under the Popular Front strategy, workers were encouraged to conduct their disputes within the confines of the Código del Trabajo and to use the strike as the weapon of final resort - taking care to ensure victory by the mobilisation of moral and material support for the strikers. According to the CTCh, this policy (which the PS had always professed to follow) led to a high proportion of the industrial disputes being settled in favour of the workers during 1937 and 1938.(101)

Although the PCCh's new trade union and strike policies were part of the more general concern to allay the fears of the Radicals and the middle classes, they also served other purposes. According to Ravines, the PCCh's acceptance of the Código del Trabajo enabled it to consolidate and expand its influence in the trade union field. Carefully selected non-aligned trade union leaders were offered legal and technical assistance by the PCCh in an effort to win them over to the party. If they refused these approaches, they were isolated and destroyed.(102) Ravines also claims that the PCCh's new policies won it adherents in the Inspectorate charged with the working of the Código del Trabajo who, in gratitude for the cooperation which the PCCh now

(101) Juan Díaz Martínez Treinta Meses de Acción en Favor del Proletariado de Chile (Santiago, 1939) pp34-36.
(102) Eudocio Ravines, op. cit., pp325-327.

extended in the field of industrial relations, allowed the party to extend its control over the trade union movement.(103) However, Ravines' claims should be treated with caution since by the time he made them, he was an avowed anti-communist fighting Cold War battles. In particular, his allegations that the Dirección General del Trabajo(DGT) in some way afforded the PCCh unfair or underhand advantages in extending its trade union control seem suspect. Not only were the Ministros del Trabajo between 1936 and 1938, hostile or, at best, indifferent towards the PCCh but the role of the Inspectorate was strictly circumscribed by the Código del Trabajo and its members were forbidden to take part in political activities. Certainly, when Ravines claims that in their anxiety for a quiet life the authorities of Trabajo jettisoned the rights of workers and employers alike, he misses the mark since the transaccionismo which he affects to despise was precisely the central function of the DGT. Indeed, while Ravines' description of the Communists' trade union tactics probably contains some truth, the expansion of the PCCh's influence in the trade union movement probably owed far more to its new constructive role in the settlement of workers' disputes and to the general popularity of the Popular Front line than it did to any of the machiavellian practices he describes.

The passion for unity which the PCCh displayed in its efforts to create the Popular Front coalition and the CTCh was also evident in other areas of party activity.

(103) Ibid. p328.

Under the leadership of Luis Hernández Parker, the FJC created an Alianza Libertadora de la Juventud, designed to channel the support of youth from all classes for the Popular Front and the anti-imperialist struggle.(104) Most of the youth organisations of the frentista parties subscribed to the ALJ and in 1937, the FJC, flushed with this success, formally dissolved itself - its members being absorbed into the PCCh.(105) However, the Federación de Juventudes Socialistas (FJS) attacked the ALJ with passion, arguing instead for the unity of working class youth and echoing the attacks of anti-frentista Socialists on the PCCh and the Popular Front.(106) The struggles between the FJS and the FJC were closely paralleled by similar developments in student politics. The Communists founded a Grupo Único Antifascista(GUA) to group together democratic university students but it was opposed from the first by the Brigada Socialista Universitaria(BSU). Indeed, the struggle between the GUA and the BSU became so bitter that, on occasion, the GUA preferred to cooperate with the Nazi student movement in elections for office in the Federación de Estudiantes de Chile.(107)

The PCCh created a series of other organisations designed to encourage and channel support for the Popular Front cause. The Movimiento pro-Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena(MEMCh) was founded by a group of wives of prominent

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- (104) Frente Único, 3rd week July, 1935; Bandera Roja 1st week of May, 1936.
(105) Boletín Interno del CC PCCh - Año I, No.2, 1937 pp28-31.
(106) Frente Popular 29.7.1937, 27.8.1937; see also, the issues of Barricada, Santiago, (an FJS publication) for September, October and November, 1937.
(107) Claridad 24.6.1938; Barricada, 2nd fortnight, September, 1937.

PCCh leaders and campaigned for women's rights as well as for the Front.(108) The Liga de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos(LDDH) founded with the help of prominent members from all the frentista parties gave effective aid to the victims of political persecution while the Alianza de Intelectuales de Chile(AICh) associated an impressive array of intellectuals with the frentista cause.(109) The Spanish Civil War provided another issue which helped to channel support for the Front, the PCCh and other frentista parties setting up committees to raise aid for the Republican cause; the committees may not have been very effective in their declared objective but they attracted support from diverse sectors.(110)

The campaigns and organisations launched by the PCCh probably helped to attract the support of some of the uncommitted to the Front cause and undoubtedly helped to strengthen the resolve of those who already supported or belonged to frentista parties. These campaigns and organisations also gave the Communists repeated opportunities to demonstrate to their allies that cooperation with the PCCh was not only possible but fruitful and that they were willing to undertake the onerous and routine tasks of administration and leave the more prestigious positions to others.

(108) See Marta Vergara Memorias de una mujer irreverente (Santiago, 1962) pp135-6. See also La Mujer Nueva, Santiago, 8.11.1935.

(109) The LDDH claimed to have helped some 2,000 victims of government persecution in late 1937. Frente Popular 13.12.1937. Leading figures of the AICh included Pablo Neruda, Alberto Romero, Vicente Huidobro and Pablo de Rokha. Ibid. 4.11.1937.

(110) According to Frente Popular 4.1.1937, such prestigious and conservative historians as Eugenio Pereira Salas and Ricardo Donoso were among those associated with the campaign.

What effects did the Popular Front strategy have on the PCCh itself? Unlike the policy changes of 1928 to 1930, the introduction of the Front strategy produced no significant casualties nor did it give rise to schismatic groups. Nonetheless, Ravines recounts that there was considerable resistance to the new strategy from the CC, a product of the low calibre of its members and their attachment to Third Period conceptions and policies.(111) According to Ravines, he had to take extraordinary measures to shake the CC out of the siege mentality and the inertia to which years of persecution and factional strife had condemned it. To jolt the CC into action along the correct lines, he first savagely attacked CC members for their past errors and mistakes, inculcating a sense of guilt and inadequacy. Rejecting advice from Comintern colleagues to replace them with new men, he allowed them to keep their posts and gave them the opportunity to redeem themselves by identifying with the new line and working energetically for its success. Secondly, he promoted a number of younger men to assist the old leaders in their tasks and placed new men in charge of the important regional committees.(112)

Ravines' account of the difficulties he faced and the methods he used to overcome them is endorsed by other ex-Communists and is probably correct in substance.(113) However, the resistance shown by the CC probably had little to do with the low calibre of its members or with any genuine

(111) Eudocio Ravines op. cit. p313, p321.

(112) Ibid. pp336-338.

(113) See, for example, Marcos Chamudes Chile, una advertencia americana pp39-50.

attachment to Third Period policies on their part. Ravines, after all, was a foreigner - and a Peruvian at that - who arrived in Chile at a time when the party was in clandestinity and when Secretary General Contreras Labarca was out of the country. He wanted to impose a radically different political line in a matter of weeks when the party had taken years to absorb Third Period changes and he issued peremptory instructions and threatened the jobs of the leadership. Moreover, he came at a time when the party had barely recovered from the factional strife of 1931 to 1933 and when the CC was particularly sensitive about falling into the errors of right deviationism. Furthermore, it seems that not all the Comintern team members agreed on the tactical details of the new strategy. Manuel Cazón, a German Communist, who was possibly Manuilsky's man on a team dominated by Dimitroff appointments, had arrived in Chile before Ravines and had apparently been urging the CC to work for the installation of a 'popular military democracy' with Ibáñez at its head.(114) Cazón had been the architect of the Mery candidacy in August 1935 and apparently continued to press for cooperation with Ibáñez in subsequent years.(115) Indeed, according to one source, Cazón was encouraging Communist student groups to launch an insurrectionary movement in favour of Ibáñez during 1938.(116) Given all these factors then, it was scarcely surprising that some CC

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- (114) Interview by Wilfredo Mayorga with Oscar Sagues, Director of Investigaciones (internal security) under Aguirre Cerda. Ercilla No.1618, 8.6.1966.
- (115) Ibid. See also, the article by J.C. Jobet in Arauco, Santiago, February 1967, entitled 'El PS y el Frente Popular en Chile'.
- (116) Interview with Ramírez Necochea, Santiago 1972.

members were reluctant to embrace the new strategy enthusiastically. Significantly enough, however, none of them openly questioned the right of the Comintern to impose the new line and, apparently, none attempted to reply to Ravines' onslaught on their past records by pointing out that some of their failures had stemmed from Comintern policies which were inappropriate to Chilean conditions.(117)

Although the CC was still complaining that some of its own members had not embraced the new strategy with sufficient enthusiasm in early 1936, signs of open resistance inside or outside the CC were rare. However, some Communists were moved to protest when the new strategy was put into practice. Thus, in mid-1936, when the PCCh endorsed the congressional candidacy of Cristóbal Saenz, a right-wing Radical latifundista, for Maúñ, some Communists objected.(118) Similarly, in early 1938, Communist University students and members of the FJC in Santiago protested against the party's approaches towards Ibáñez.(119) Conversely, a few Communists were expelled for continuing to work for the Ibáñez presidential candidacy after they had been ordered to desist.(120)

Despite the absence of open and determined opposition to the new strategy, the task of adapting the party's organisation to the demands of the new tactics was not easy. In effect, the new strategy called for new methods of work and new organisational forms which would transform

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- (117) Marta Vergara op. cit. p120
(118) Eudocio Ravines op. cit. p321.
(119) Claridad 16.3.1938, 24.3.1938.
(120) Frente Popular 22.2.1938.

the PCCh from an introverted sect, made timid by fears of persecution and deviationism, into a more open party, self-confident and extrovert, capable of winning mass support. To that end, the PCCh introduced two new organisational forms, the sector industrial and the radio de calle. (121) Unlike the fraction, which was designed basically to function in a particular plant or factory, the sector industrial had the task of encouraging the formation of new groups in the factories and of supporting moves towards trade union unity. The radio de calle, on the other hand, had the particular task of helping to create Popular Front committees and organisations and of recruiting for the party. Initially at least, these new organisations appear to have been more of a hindrance than a help; complaints were made that they complicated the chain of command, generated conflicts of authority and impeded the transmission of the party's line to the unions. (122)

If the new organisational forms produced difficulties, the party was still afflicted by some of the organisational defects which had been indicted during the early 1930s. Regional party conferences held during 1936, indicated that the local organisations still suffered from sectarianism and bureaucratism and that there were still too few trained cadres. Cells continued to be organised on a territorial rather than a factory basis, party work was still dependent on the energies of small numbers of militants and party

(121) Boletín de la Comisión Nacional de Organización
No. I, May 1936.

(122) Ibid.

tasks' were still not being distributed to those best suited to perform them.(123) Despite the exhortations of the leadership, the situation had not improved by 1937 and, instead, not only were the old faults persisting but new ones had crept in. A plenary session of the CC on organisation in March 1937, attacked the tendency of some local groups to submerge themselves in Popular Front bodies and to neglect their own institutional life.(124) Even though most of the important CRs were reporting an overall improvement in the performance of their organisation by early 1938, complaints of the low ideological and organisational level of the membership, of the lack of control over the performance of party tasks and of slow recruitment of new members continued to be made.(125)

But, despite the repeated and ritualistic flagellations which the party gave itself for its organisational shortcomings, there is some evidence which suggests that it began to experience a general improvement soon after the formation of the Popular Front coalition. In May 1936, the CRs of Antofagasta and Concepción were congratulated for correcting some of their organisational deficiencies and, during that year, the party were able to hold a series of regional conferences, sometimes in provinces like O'Higgins which simply did not figure in party news of the early 1930s.(126) Moreover, while the CR Santiago was lambasting itself for its

(123) Bandera Roja 4th week of May 1936; 20.6.1936, 3rd week of August, 1936.

(124) Boletín Interno del CC, Año I, No.2, no date, p20.

(125) See, for example, Boletín de Departamento Regional de Organización del PCCh, Santiago, February 1938.

(126) Bandera Roja 4th week of May 1936.

organisational deficiencies during early 1938, it revealed that 40% of its membership now paid dues - a statistic which, although cited as a matter for concern, was a considerable improvement on the early 1930s - and that it intended to employ two full-time functionaries for work in trade union, peasant and youth activities in the region.(127)

At the X National Party Congress, held in April 1938 in Santiago, the PCCh indulged in some justified self-congratulation on the progress it had made since the last Congress which had finished its sessions in the Santiago Penitentiary in 1933.(128) The PCCh's organisational preoccupations at the X Congress demonstrated a new-found confidence and strength and while old deficiencies and errors were criticised, the central concern was now to create control machinery which would regulate the members' performance of party tasks and provide a structure of discipline for a membership swollen by new recruits. Instructions were issued to the regional and local organisations to set up Control Commissions, composed of three members of at least five years' standing, which were to be directly responsible to the National Control Commission in Santiago, headed by Galo González.(129) The X Congress also instructed members to form closer relations with the Socialists and even to proselytize the Trotskyists 'one by one'.(130) Finally, the Congress issued instructions for the

(127) Boletín de Departamento Regional de Organización del PCCh, Santiago, February 1938.

(128) El Congreso de la Victoria. Resumen de los informes, discusiones y resoluciones del X Congreso del PCCh, Santiago, 1938, p15.

(129) Ibid. p44.

(130) Ibid. p45.

compilation of accurate statistics of the membership and to institutionalise the payments of dues.(131) All in all, X Congress resolutions on organisational matters showed the PCCh laying the basis for a far more effective and professional party machine than had existed to date.

If the PCCh's own criticisms of its organisational shortcomings are taken literally, its growing strength after 1935 had more to do with the popularity of its new political line than its efforts to correct organisational deficiencies. In effect, the Popular Front strategy enabled the PCCh to cease its costly confrontations with government and with other working class parties, confrontations which had prevented any effective organisational improvement in the early 1930s and which had placed a severe strain on the loyalty and enthusiasm of the membership. Moreover, the new strategy demanded that the PCCh made extraordinary efforts to appeal to different social classes and to capture mass support. To that end, following the example of the French Communist Party, the PCCh began to use the appeal of patriotism and tried to create a gulf between the masses who were, by definition, democratic and progressive and the anti-national oligarchy, the 'fifty families' who had ruled Chile for so long and sold the country's patrimony to the Imperialists.(132) In sharp contrast to the 1920s and early 1930s, then, when the PCCh had treated the institutions and founding fathers of the Republic with indifference or

(131) Ibid. p44.

(132) Carlos Contreras Labarca Principios, July/August 1967, p29.

contempt, it began to celebrate patriotic holidays and to praise the Armed Forces.(133) Similarly, the PCCh's attitude towards heroes and events celebrated by other political parties also changed. Communist Deputies paid homage to the nineteenth century Liberal leader, José Victorino Lastarria and, closer to current events, the PCCh even managed a few words of praise amongst more of measured criticism, for the Socialist Republic and its leaders.(134)

The PCCh's new orientation not only facilitated its approach towards more moderate political opinion but also helped it to avoid police persecution and harassment. Although party activists continued to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment at times, now that the PCCh was no longer calling for violent revolutionary struggle and now that it was a member of a powerful coalition which could protest vociferously, police harassment became more circumspect.(135)

If the PCCh's increasing strength is difficult to measure in terms of organisational improvement, it was clearly demonstrated by electoral statistics. In April 1935, the PCCh fought municipal elections without allies

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- (133) Sometimes, however, the PCCh's perspective on patriotic holidays was different. Navy Day in 1937, for example, was used to celebrate the Naval Mutiny of 1931. Frente Popular 21.5.1937.
- (134) Boletines del Congreso. Diputados, Sesiones Ordinarios, 1938. Vol. I, p797. See Bandera Roja 4.6.1936 and Frente Popular 4.6.1937 for PCCh comment on the Socialist Republic.
- (135) For descriptions of police persecution, see Bandera Roja 4th week of May 1936, 2nd week of July 1936, 1st week of August 1936; Frente Popular, Concepción, 25.12.1937. Glaufbauf, one of the Comintern team members, was unfortunate enough to fall into police hands and was tortured before being deported. La Opinión 6.9.1935; 7.9.1935.

and polled roughly 4,000 votes nationally and elected some five regidores.(136) In the March 1937 congressional elections, the PCCh polled 17,162 votes (4.16% of the votes cast) and elected one Senator and six Deputies.(137) In the April 1938 municipal elections, it polled some 27,175 votes (some 7% of the total votes cast) with frentista help and elected 42 regidores.(138)

Significantly enough, the CC was careful not to allow the party's congressmen to constitute an alternative centre of power as they had in the mid-1920s. Most of those elected to Congress in 1937 were CC members prior to that date and the PCCh's chief officers, Lafertte, President of the party, and Contreras Labarca, the Secretary General, were elected to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies respectively. In line with previous practice, the PCCh congressmen were instructed to pay their salaries into the Party Treasury and they received rather less than half back in wages.(139)

The PCCh's membership probably did not grow quite so rapidly as its electoral support between 1935 and 1938. Despite the broad appeal of the Popular Front campaign

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- (136) No official statistics for the 1935 municipal elections exist. The figure of roughly 4,000 PCCh votes was arrived at by an exhaustive study of the regional press.
- (137) Sergio Guillisasti Tagle Los Partidos Políticos Chilenos (Santiago, 1964) p319. The six Deputies were Juan Guerra, Amador Pairoa, Andrés Escobar Díaz, José Vega Díaz, Marcos Chamudes and Contreras Labarca. They were later joined by Oscar Baeza, elected as a Socialist.
- (138) Estadística Chilena, June 1938, p281.
- (139) Frente Popular, Iquique, 18.7.1937. Out of a monthly salary of 2,000 pesos, PCCh Deputies received 700 pesos.

and a recruitment policy which opened the doors of the PCCh to new members from all classes, including the middle classes, some established party members evidently found it difficult to overcome their class antagonisms and the habits of caution and suspicion learnt in the clandestine years.(140) Nevertheless, if previous estimates of 4,000 to 5,000 members in 1935 bear any relation to the truth, it seems likely that this figure doubled or even tripled by October 1938. Indeed, in early 1937, the FJC alone, although admittedly not part of the PCCh proper, claimed 6,000 members in contrast to the few hundreds of the early 1930s.(141) And by December 1938, the CR Antofagasta claimed a regional membership of 7,000, over 1,000 of whom had joined the party after Aguirre Cerda's triumph.(142) Even allowing for exaggeration, the claims of the CR Antofagasta, one of the three principal strongholds of the PCCh, would suggest that a total national membership of between 10,000 and 15,000, just prior to Aguirre Cerda's election, would not be an unreasonable estimate.

If the growth in the PCCh's membership between 1935 and 1938 must remain a matter for conjecture, the party showed increasing signs of strength in other directions. In September 1936, it began to publish a national daily newspaper, an objective which had only been achieved for brief periods in the 1920s. Frente Popular was the PCCh's first successful effort at popular journalism and it soon achieved

(140) Bandera Roja 2nd week of May 1936.

(141) Boletín Interno del CC PCCh - Año I, No.2, p28.

(142) El Popular, Antofagasta, 19.12.1938.

a wider circulation than the staid and doctrinaire newspapers which the PCCh had previously published. Some powerful regional committees followed Santiago's example and published similar newspapers - for example, Frente Popular in Iquique and El Popular in Antofagasta.

Despite the signs of increased strength and relative prosperity which the PCCh had begun to show by 1938, it might well be argued that the party failed to achieve the more profound objectives of the Popular Front strategy. As originally envisaged, the Popular Front was intended to be a vast structured movement which would draw support from all social classes and all political parties except the most intransigent elements of the extreme right and which would roll relentlessly forward until the goal of national liberation had been achieved. However, although the PCCh was able to create an electoral coalition, a unified trade union movement and a series of auxiliary Front organisations, it failed to create a Popular Front movement which measured up to the original conception either in scope or momentum. Interparty rivalries and suspicions delayed the formal structuring of the Popular Front until September 1937 and effectively prevented it from becoming anything more than an electoral coalition of a type familiar to Chilean politics, held together by external circumstances and political ambition rather than by any common commitment to fundamental reform. (143) Moreover, as the October 1938 election

(143) La Hora 7.9.1937.

result showed, despite the PCCh's efforts to make the Front's appeal as broad as possible, it failed to make substantial inroads into the popular support enjoyed by the right-wing parties. Indeed, just as world events and the battle between democracy and fascism contributed towards the victory of the Front, the same events and the rise of the Popular Front in Chile caused conservative elements in the country to feel that Christian civilisation and order was threatened.

The Popular Front strategy had been envisaged as the means by which the revolutionary struggle in Chile could be continued and even accelerated. One of its principal objectives was the diminution, if not the liquidation, of the influence of the 'national reformist bourgeoisie' amongst the masses. As the CC graphically put it in February 1936, 'if the (national reformist bourgeoisie) is disposed to take one step with the proletariat, we will seek the way to make it take two; if it tries to stop, we will pass over it together with the masses which it influences'.(144)

But, in the event, the PCCh found itself in a very similar position to that in which it had hoped to place the 'national reformist bourgeoisie', or at least that part of it represented by the PR. It was the PCCh which was forced to make the significant concessions in order to create and hold together the Popular Front coalition and, in the end, it was the 'proletariat' (the PCCh and the PS) which was harnessed to the political plans and ambitions of the 'national reformist bourgeoisie' rather than the reverse.

(144) Boletín del CC PCCh, March 1936, No.8.

If the PCCh failed to create the type of combative mass movement which it had hoped for and failed to realise the offensive potential of the Popular Front strategy in the class struggle, it did claim that the Popular Front had succeeded in defending democracy in Chile. How far this claim was justified is difficult to judge. While the existence of a more or less united opposition probably did check some of Alessandri's more autocratic impulses, the frentista charge that he was planning to set up a dictatorship is questionable. However, Ross's dictatorial leanings are well documented and it seems likely that the Popular Front's triumph in October 1938, at the very least, saved Chile from a more authoritarian period of rule than it subsequently enjoyed under Aguirre Cerda.(145)

If the PCCh's record in achieving the more profound goals of the Popular Front strategy was mixed, the benefits which it reaped in attempting to implement the strategy were substantial. As a member of the Popular Front coalition, the PCCh was able to operate with a considerable degree of freedom from harassment by the authorities, make effective contact with broader sectors of the community, increase its membership and electoral support and improve its organisation. Moreover, the Popular Front strategy enabled the PCCh to create a working relationship with the PR and with other parties of the left which enabled it to break out of the

(145) The British Ambassador, for example, reported that Ross had told him that Parliament should be dispensed with, that democracy was impracticable for Chile and that the country needed a sharp turn to the right. FOR FO 371/18664 A 6375/11/9, dispatch Bentinck to Sir John Simon, dated 12.7.1935. See also Donoso op. cit., II, pp178-179.

vicious circle of isolation and defeat into which it had been locked by Third Period strategy. In sum, the Popular Front helped the PCCh to move from the margin of Chilean political life into its mainstream - a journey which may not have brought the party any closer to its revolutionary goal in the short term, but which ensured its survival and even prosperity as an organisation and, in the longer run, increased its chances of really influencing the course of Chilean political development.

Chapter 5

Pedro Aguirre Cerda and the Popular
Front, 1938-1941

President Pedro Aguirre Cerda governed Chile from December 1938 until November 1941 when the ravages of tuberculosis forced his resignation from office and, shortly afterwards, caused his death. Despite the high expectations and, initially at least, the enthusiastic support of his Popular Front allies, no new Chile emerged from Aguirre Cerda's brief administration and promises to raise the standard of living of the working masses were only partially and temporarily redeemed.

The failure of the Popular Front government to implement its reform programme stemmed from a number of factors. Amongst the most important were the economic difficulties facing the country and the activities of Aguirre Cerda's right-wing opponents who controlled Congress until March 1941 and who used all the means at their disposal to frustrate the new regime. Partly as a result of the bitter and intransigent opposition of the Right, Aguirre Cerda began to retreat from Popular Front goals and policies and the old rivalries and tensions inside and between the frentista parties re-emerged with fresh vigour. By early 1940, the PS had split over the issue of continued participation in the government and the PR had forced the first of several cabinet crises on the government without informing

or consulting its Popular Front allies. At the same time, the PCCh began to move away from the policy of unconditional support for the government which it had pursued during 1939 and its relations with Aguirre Cerda, never close, deteriorated. The almost moribund Popular Front was finally destroyed by an explosion of antagonisms between the PS and the PCCh in December 1940. However, neither the destruction of the Popular Front nor the defeat of the right-wing parties in the March 1941 congressional elections made the task of governing any easier for Aguirre Cerda. By April 1941 an open breach had developed between him and his own Radical Party, after March the largest single party in Congress, and he was forced to govern without Radical participation in his cabinet between June and September 1941. Only on the eve of his resignation from office did he make his peace with the PR.

Despite the failures of the Popular Front government and coalition, the years 1938 to 1941 were probably the most successful and prosperous the PCCh had experienced since its foundation. During that period the PCCh's membership and electoral support expanded dramatically and it was able to extend and consolidate its influence in the trade union movement. As in previous phases of its existence, the PCCh's successes - and failures - were governed by both national circumstance and Comintern policy and it was to the party's good fortune that both sets of factors tended to point in similar directions at roughly the same time. For this reason, amongst others, the PCCh did not suffer from any

great internal conflicts between 1938 and 1941 nor did the CC have to contend with any serious challenges to its authority.

The economic background to the political development of the Aguirre Cerda administration was, on the whole, sombre. By the time Aguirre Cerda took office, Chile was already in the grip of a mild recession caused, in the main, by a decline in world demand for copper - by then Chile's principal export and a major source of revenue for the state.(1)

Two events in 1939 seriously exacerbated Chile's economic difficulties. In January 1939, an earthquake destroyed Chillán and the important manufacturing zone around Concepción and, later in that year, the outbreak of the Second World War disrupted Chile's traditional trading patterns. These events were the main cause of a decline in industrial and mining production during 1939, although the right-wing parties blamed frentista-inspired labour unrest and the Front, right-wing economic sabotage.(2) However, in 1940, partly because of US economic aid and trading agreements, both mining and industrial production surpassed 1938 levels and continued to improve in 1941.(3) Largely because of the closure of European markets, agricultural production - which had had a bumper year in 1939 -

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- (1) FOR FO 371/2238 A 6078/324/9, Economic Report from A.J. Pack to Lord Halifax, dated August 1939.
(2) See Appendix B for the indices of production during these years.
(3) Ibid.

fell during 1940 and 1941.(4)

If, by the time Aguirre Cerda left office, the economy had appeared to have recovered from some of the reverses it had experienced during 1939, the situation of the working population was being eroded by inflation. During 1939, the government had taken firm steps to keep the cost of living down and had encouraged the granting of favourable wage settlements, with the result that broad sectors had enjoyed a real improvement in their standard of living. But, during 1940, inflation (caused, in the main, by government fiscal policies and the rising price of imports) began to take hold.(5) From 3% in 1939, the rate of inflation rose to 12.6% in 1940 and 15.2% in 1941 and while cash wages apparently kept abreast of the rising cost of living in some industries, in others they did not and in real terms the general living standards of the masses suffered from a slow but persistent erosion.(6)

However, Aguirre Cerda's most pressing problems when he came to office were political rather than economic. The major right-wing parties had not accepted their defeat in October 1938 with good grace and they determined on a policy of ferocious opposition to the new regime. In Congress, the right-wing parties were generally able to assemble a majority in the Chamber of Deputies and they had an absolute majority in the Senate. Using their control over Congress, they

(4) Ibid. See, also, Salvador Valdés Cinco Años de Gobierno de Izquierda (Santiago, 1944) pp109-112, for a fuller, if right wing, explanation for the decline in agricultural production.

(5) P.T. Ellsworth Chile: An Economy in Transition (New York, 1945) pp107-118

(6) See Appendix D for a comparison of inflation rates and wage increases in the mining industries.

systematically blocked government legislation, introduced measures designed to embarrass the government and to cause dissension amongst its allies and impeached ministers in attempts to disrupt and alter the composition of cabinets.(7) Outside Congress, members and supporters of the right-wing parties created difficulties for the regime. Some alessandrista appointees to semi-fiscal agencies refused to resign from office as convention demanded and right-wing state bureaucrats were unco-operative or obstructive.(8) The right-wing press, more numerous and influential than that of the frentista parties, conducted virulent campaigns against the government and its supporters while, according to some, others embarked on more sinister efforts to sabotage the economy.(9) Indeed, according to the frentista parties, the right-wing parties were intent on re-creating the same conditions of stalemate and deadlock which had preceded the September 1924 golpe and, whatever the truth of these allegations, General Ariosto Herrera, with the encouragement of right-wing extremists, did launch an abortive coup (known as the Ariostazo) in August 1939.(10)

By the beginning of 1940, the opposition of the main

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- (7) For descriptions of the activities of the right-wing opposition see, Florencio Durán El Partido Radical pp197-220; John Reese Stevenson The Chilean Popular Front (Philadelphia, 1942) pp96-106.
- (8) Revista Hoy 11.5.1939; Frente Popular 29.8.1939.
- (9) See, for example, Pablo Cuello's report to the XI PCCh Congress (December 1939) in which he accuses mine owners of sabotaging coal production. Frente Popular 25.12.1939. In 1940, British Embassy observers also claimed that there had been 'mild sabotage' from right-wing industrialists: FOR FO 371/24182 A 418/51/9, despatch Charles Orde to Lord Halifax, dated 11.10.1940.
- (10) See Leonidas Bravo Lo que supo un Auditor de Guerra (Santiago, 1955) pp122-141 for account of the Ariostazo.

body of the Right had lost some of its savagery mainly because the government's visible drift away from Popular Front policies and objectives made recourse to extra-constitutional methods unattractive and unnecessary. However, the Right continued to present stubborn opposition to the government and although they were persuaded to make a deal with the PR to secure the passage of a package of government legislation through Congress in July 1940, it appears that they were blackmailed into it by Aguirre Cerda who threatened to reveal that certain major right-wing parties had received financial aid from Germany.(11) In late 1940, relations between the government and right-wing parties again deteriorated when they threatened to boycott the congressional elections scheduled for March 1941 because of the violent tactics adopted by frentista supporters in a senatorial by-election.(12) Aguirre Cerda, however, took steps to ensure that those elections were fairly conducted and the right-wing parties did participate - and lost their control over Congress.(13) After March 1941, the right-wing parties had lost some of their congressional teeth but by that time, too, the Popular Front was in ruins and the government no longer seemed to pose a threat to right-wing interests.

The right-wing opposition was, by no means, the only political group which caused Aguirre Cerda concern. He soon found that the ability and willingness of his frentista allies to support his government was limited and,

(11) FOR FO 371/24182 A 2839/51/9, despatch from Bentinck to Lord Halifax, dated 19.7.1940.

(12) El Siglo, 19.11.1940.

(13) John Reese Stevenson op. cit. p115.

indeed, that some of them could be as troublesome as his declared enemies. Frictions between the Front parties prevented them from co-ordinating the activities of their representatives in Congress until August 1939 and it was only after the Ariostazo that they managed to put together a combination of centre and left-wing parties which gave the government a temporary majority in the Chamber of Deputies.(14) By early 1940, all the major Front parties had expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the government's performance and in February the PR underlined the coalition's ineffectiveness by forcing a cabinet crisis without consulting or informing its allies - an action which it repeated the following July, despite their protests.(15)

However, the effectiveness of the Front was not only conditioned by differences between its members but also by Aguirre Cerda's attitude towards them, individually and collectively. As a conservative Radical who had only accepted the Front as part of the price he had to pay for the PR's presidential nomination, Aguirre Cerda had no liking for the coalition's more far-reaching goals nor for its left-wing members. Forced by the intransigence of the Right - and by the PR's refusal to share government office with right-wing parties - to rely on the Front's support, he was not prepared to give it a decisive say in his government. Still less was he prepared to allow the Front to develop its role as the mobilising agent of massive popular support around Front and government goals as the PCCh wished. Indeed, Aguirre

(14) Frente Popular 23.8.1939; 7.9.1939.

(15) Ibid. 8.2.1940; 18.7.1940.

Cerda's attitude towards the Front was conditioned by the fact that, with the incorporation of the PR and the PS into government, the coalition became one of the principal means by which the PCCh (the only major Front party not to share high office) could seek to influence government policy and actions. Aguirre Cerda was prepared to let the coalition survive until the PCCh moved away from unconditional support for the government and until international developments made the association of the PCCh with his administration a source of increasing embarrassment.

In contrast to his distant coolness towards the Popular Front, his relations with his own Radical Party were both close and turbulent. According to most commentators, the major cause of turbulence was the insatiable desire of Radicals for government posts and appointments - a desire so intense that one Radical was moved to remark that Aguirre Cerda would have had to arrange a loan of public posts from Argentina to satisfy it.(16) Those thwarted in their ambitions for office converted the PR into a veritable battleground as faction struggled with faction to capture the Junta Central Radical(JCR) the body which had the power to grant, deny and withdraw the permission which all Radicals needed to occupy high government office. Once in control, the victorious faction used the JCR to impose a series of cabinet crises on Aguirre Cerda by instructing ministers to resign. In February 1940, the JCR instructed the incumbent Radicals to resign because they had become identified with

(16) Alberto Cabero Recuerdos de don Pedro Aguirre Cerda (Santiago, 1948) p248. The Radical was Guillermo Labarca.

the shortcomings of the regime.(17) While Aguirre Cerda accepted the crisis with good grace and used the opportunity to give his cabinet a more conservative complexion by incorporating conservative Radical magnates (thus creating the so-called millionaires' cabinet), he was furious when the JCR forced another cabinet crisis in July 1940 on the pretext that the Radical Minister of the Interior was responsible for the over-energetic police repression of some riotous disturbances in Santiago.(18) Indeed, on that occasion, Aguirre Cerda drafted his resignation from office protesting that it was impossible to govern because of the continual Radical interference.(19) The struggle between Aguirre Cerda and the PR came to a head in April 1941 when the JCR, on a disputed majority decision, instructed the Radical Ministers to resign in protest against the closure of two newspapers by the Radical Minister of the Interior, Arturo Olavarría Bravo.(20) The Ministers resigned but Aguirre Cerda refused to accept their resignations and they continued in office in defiance of JCR orders - an offence which led to their expulsion from the PR.(21) The following month all the Ministers (except for Olavarría Bravo) made their peace with the PR and Aguirre Cerda decided to form a cabinet of administration without formal Radical participation and with Olavarría Bravo as his Minister of Interior.(22)

(17) La Hora 9.2.1940.

(18) John Reese Stevenson op. cit. pp99-100; Gabriel González Videla Memorias (2 vols., Santiago, 1975) I, pp261-263.

(19) Alberto Cabero op. cit., pp249-252.

(20) La Nación 25.4.1941.

(21) Ibid. 29.4.1941.

(22) Ibid. 11.6.1941.

The PR remained outside cabinet until September 1941 although it did not give up its non-cabinet posts. In that month, Aguirre Cerda, realising that he did not have long to live, took the opportunity of Olavarría Bravo's resignation to make his peace with the party.(23)

Although personal rivalries and an unbridled passion for office probably were the central cause of the difficulties between Aguirre Cerda and the PR, the old battle between left and right-wingers, submerged and distorted by competition for office, still persisted. Right-wing Radicals were pressing for the withdrawal of the PR from the Front in early 1939 while during 1940, Juan Antonio Ríos began his campaign for the PR's presidential nomination by making similar calls.(24) Moreover, according to one source, the February 1940 cabinet crisis had been forced by right-wing Radicals who hoped that the resignations of the Radical ministers would precipitate a sympathetic resignation of Socialist ministers, leaving Aguirre Cerda free to re-organise his cabinet thoroughly and come to an arrangement with the Right.(25) If this was the case, and the PS evidently thought that it was, the Socialist ministers refused to resign and the strategem failed.(26) Similarly, the July 1940 cabinet crisis, ostensibly a protest against the conduct of the Minister of the Interior, was evidently also intended to secure the removal of the conservative ministers who had

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- (23) See Arturo Olavarría Bravo Casos y Cosas de la Política (Santiago, 1950) pp96-109, for the circumstances of his resignation.
(24) Frente Popular 16.1.1939; El Siglo 4.9.1940.
(25) Gabriel González Videla op. cit., I, pp261-263.
(26) Consigna 17.2.1940.

been incorporated into the cabinet in February. Finally, since Olavarría Bravo had incurred PR displeasure by obeying Aguirre Cerda's instructions to restore 'social discipline', by forcing the Radical ministers to resign in April 1941 the JCR was expressing opposition to government policy as well as indulging in its customary power play.(27)

Aguirre Cerda's relations with the PS, the only other major Front party to share government office, were more harmonious in the long run than those he had with either the PR or the PCCh. This harmony did not stem from any profound agreement over government policy and actions - except, perhaps, in the field of foreign affairs - but was the product of other factors. In the first place, the PS did not constantly importune Aguirre Cerda for government posts and, secondly, its antagonisms towards both the PR and the PCCh made it the President's natural ally in the context of the internal politics of the Popular Front.

Despite the harmony which developed between Aguirre Cerda and the PS, however, the Socialists were the first persistent Popular Front critics of the government's shortcomings. Indeed, it was not until late 1940 that the PCCh overtook the PS as the government's most vehement frentista critic. Thus, in July 1939, the PS urged the President to

(27) See, Olavarría Bravo's Casos y Cosas p63 for Aguirre Cerda's instructions to him. He was ordered to suspend the right to strike in the countryside, prohibit strikes in public service industries and deal with newspapers which threatened public order, social tranquility and Chile's relations with other countries.

take more resolute action to achieve Popular Front goals while in September 1939, it instructed its ministers to resign, in part at least, because it wanted to replace them by Socialists of greater weight who, it was hoped, would be able to press for Popular Front goals and policies with greater success.(28) In late 1939 and early 1940, the PS continued to urge the government to implement Popular Front policies and to take firmer measures to deal with its right-wing opponents.(29)

Towards the end of 1939, it became evident that the PS's criticism of government failings was not only the product of an objective assessment of its inadequacies but also the response of the PS leadership to fierce internal pressures. By the end of 1939, an influential minority, dissatisfied with the party's participation in an administration which had failed to bring about radical reforms and which seemed unlikely to do so in the future, accused the PS leaders of having become compromised by government office and of forgetting their revolutionary principles. The inconformistas, as they were called, argued that the PS should leave the administration and adopt a policy of conditional support towards the government.(30) Using many of the arguments fashioned by the anti-frentistas in their campaign to prevent the PS from joining the Front, the inconformistas sought to oust

(28) Consigna 30.9.1939.

(29) See, for example, PS manifestos and declarations in Consigna 8.10.1939; 25.11.1939; 2.12.1939; 13.1.1940; 20.1.1940; 16.3.1940.

(30) See César Godoy Urrutia's pamphlets Adonde va el Socialismo? (Santiago, 1939) and Qué es el inconformismo (Santiago, 1940) for the position of the inconformistas.

the PS leadership at the National PS Congress held in December 1939. Defeated at that Congress, the inconformistas continued their attacks on the PS leadership and were expelled in April 1940.(31) Led by Godoy Urrutia, the inconformistas, who included five PS congressmen, created the Partido Socialista de Trabajadores(PST) in May 1940.(32)

With the expulsion of the inconformistas, the PS became even more firmly committed to a policy of continued participation in the government, and, indeed, Socialists served in all Aguirre Cerda's cabinets. Nevertheless, the PS continued to make public criticisms of the government's short-comings and continued to press for the adoption of left-wing policies.

Undoubtedly the strongest factor in the harmony which developed between the PS and Aguirre Cerda were the differences they both had with the PR and the PCCh. The PS always had the revolutionary's contempt for the bourgeois reformism of the PR and had struggled with the Radicals for place and influence inside the Popular Front. After Aguirre Cerda took office, the PS and the PR competed for government posts and appointments and once these had been distributed, the partisan activities of Radicals and Socialists in office were a source of constant friction between the two parties. The PR accused the Socialist Minister of Health of carrying out a purge of Radical functionaries in the departments under his control and the Socialist Minister of Fomento of

(31) Consigna 13.4.1940; 30.4.1940.

(32) See, Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, p143 and Alejandro Chelén Rojas Trayectoria del Socialismo (Buenos Aires, 1967) pp97-101 for accounts of the split.

circumventing normal diplomatic and commercial channels - under the control of Radical ministers - by sending his own missions to do business abroad.(33) Socialists alleged that the Radical Minister of Education unduly favoured his own party in his appointments and that the Radical Minister of Finance deliberately sabotaged the work of the Socialist Ministers by keeping them short of funds.(34) Frictions between the two parties extended to the provincial governments; the Radicals of Nuble, for example, doing their utmost to get rid of the Socialist Intendente.(35)

An additional factor in the creation of a climate of hostility between the PR and the PS was the PR's close relationship with the PCCh. This relationship, largely the product of the PCCh's determination to keep on good terms with the PR irrespective of which political or personalist current dominated it at any particular time, resulted, according to the PS in an 'unholy alliance' designed to limit the growth of Socialist influence.(36) The PS was particularly annoyed by Radical-Communist co-operation in the trade union movement which, it claimed, prevented the election of Socialist union officials and the adoption of Socialist policies in a number of unions, including teachers' and railway workers' unions.(37)

The Socialists' hostility towards the PCCh, however, was of more importance to the cementing of good relations

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- (33) Luis Palma Zúñiga Pedro Aguirre Cerda (Santiago, 1963) p159; La Hora 3.5.1940.
(34) Consigna 16.9.1939; 16.12.1939.
(35) Ibid. 16.2.1940.
(36) Ibid. 20.1.1940. Article by Jobet.
(37) Ibid. 20.1.1940; 26.3.1940; 30.3.1940.

with Aguirre Cerda than was its conflict with the PR. Ironically enough, although the PS and the PCCh frequently agreed in their appraisal of the government's errors and shortcomings, their deep-seated rivalry and antagonism ensured that they were never far from open warfare. Indeed, some incidents of local and even national conflict occurred when the leaderships of the two parties were ostensibly on the best of terms. Thus, in Coquimbo in January 1939, there was some street fighting between Communists and Socialists while in July of the same year, a more serious and national struggle developed between Communist and Socialist trade union leaders over the election of officers to the national executive (CDN) of the CTCh.(38) Accusing the Socialists of using underhand methods to ensure the election of their candidates to the CDN, Communist union leaders refused to accept the election results and the CTCh split into two warring factions. Only strong pressure from the political leaderships of both parties secured a compromise peace in October 1939 - a peace which once again gave the Socialists control of the CDN but which increased the size of that body and gave the PCCh two additional seats.(39) By that time, however, another source of friction had emerged to bedevil PS-PCCh relations - the Second World War. Although the outbreak of the war did not lead to drastic changes in the PCCh's domestic policies, the PCCh's defence of the Nazi-Soviet pact, the partition of Poland and the Russian invasion of Finland brought forth a wave of acid criticism from the PS - and in some areas helped to lead

(38) Frente Popular 16.1.1939; 7.8.1939.

(39) Ibid. 26.10.1939. The CDN was expanded to 16 members, six of whom were Communists.

to a recrudescence of street clashes between the two parties.(40) Leaving aside, for the moment, a more detailed consideration of PS-PCCh relations during 1940, hostilities between the two parties were a principal cause of the break-up of the Popular Front in December 1940 and, indeed, continued unabated until July 1941.

It seems that relations between Aguirre Cerda and the PCCh were not strained by Communist ambitions for high government office. The PCCh made it clear before the 1938 presidential elections that it would not play a dominant role in any government formed as the result of a frontista victory nor would it accept cabinet office and when Aguirre Cerda did invite the PCCh to serve in his government in December 1938 the party refused.(41) The reasons which the PCCh gave on that occasion were that in the present circumstances - when the Right would be using all the means at its disposal to block the implementation of the Front programme and when Aguirre Cerda needed all the international support and sympathy he could get - Communist participation in his government would be inadvisable. The PCCh added that it had no wish to exacerbate the fears and anxieties of the Armed Forces, which had in the recent past prompted them to intervene directly in politics.(42)

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- (40) See Consigna 9.9.1939; 16.9.1939; 30.9.1939 for PS attacks on the PCCh's new international line. See, Frente Popular 14.10.1939; 4.11.1939 for accounts of street clashes between Socialists and Communists in Lota in which differences over foreign policy played a part.
- (41) Frente Popular 7.10.1938; 10.12.1938.
- (42) Ibid. 10.12.1938.

Despite the PCCh's public refusal to serve in cabinet and the convincing, not to say praiseworthy, reasons which it gave for that decision, there is evidence which suggests that the party did ask Aguirre Cerda for ministerial positions. According to González Videla, who was a close ally of the PCCh at that time, the party asked him to intercede with Aguirre Cerda in order to procure the Ministry of Labour and the top positions in two government agencies for Communists.(43) González Videla reports that Aguirre Cerda rejected these requests; firstly, because he did not want to further inflame his already hysterical right-wing opponents and, secondly, because the PS had categorically refused to serve in cabinet with the PCCh.(44) González Videla states that he fully approved Aguirre Cerda's decision since, in private conversations with Comintern representatives in Chile, he had been assured that the PCCh would continue to support the government whether or not its ambitions for office were satisfied.(45)

González Videla's evidence suggests then, that, apart from the hostile political climate, the PCCh was deprived of cabinet office by the opposition of the Socialists - and by Comintern policy which assured Aguirre Cerda of Communist support without having to pay for it in the traditional manner. Thus, Aguirre Cerda's offer of government office to the PCCh and the party's public rejection of cabinet posts were matters of form. By calling on the PCCh to serve in his government, Aguirre Cerda publicly recognised his debt to the PCCh while

(43) Gabriel González Videla op. cit., I, p26.

(44) Ibid. p207.

(45) Ibid. p216.

the Communists, in rejecting cabinet office, recognised the realities of the situation and sought to make what political capital it could from a gesture of self-sacrifice.

The same evidence also suggests that the darker speculations which some commentators have made on the PCCh's 'real' reasons for refusing cabinet office are irrelevant.(46) If there was no real possibility of serving in cabinet, the notion that the PCCh refused office because it wanted to profit from its association with the regime's successes, avoid responsibility for its failures and capitalise on the discontent which those would inevitably cause seems unfounded - even though this was, in effect, what happened. However, it could be argued that the PCCh asked for the Ministry of Labour specifically to elicit a negative response since, given that ministry's importance in the struggle for trade union influence, the Socialists would be bound to object. But there is no evidence to suggest that Aguirre Cerda made a counter-proposal of a less sensitive ministry and indeed, since he also failed to give the PCCh a proper share of posts in the public administration, it seems reasonable to suppose that he did not want the PCCh in government at all.(47)

Since it seems unlikely that the PCCh had any real

(46) See, for example, R.J. Alexander Communism in Latin America p192; Alberto Cabero op. cit. p335.

(47) Ernst Halperin suggests another reason for the PCCh's refusal to participate in cabinet - residual Third Period repugnance towards collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Nationalism and Communism in Chile (Mass., 1965) p92. The same objection applies to his theory and, in any event, since the party accepted the Front strategy with little difficulty it seems unlikely that, had other conditions been more propitious, the party would have found such feelings an insurmountable obstacle in 1939.

expectation of high government office, it also seems improbable that it was 'profoundly aggrieved' at having its ambitions thwarted as González Videla has claimed.(48) In any event, while the party may well have been annoyed at not receiving its proper share of administrative posts, no sense of grievance characterised its attitude towards the government during 1939 - indeed, during that year the PCCh gave the government its unconditional support.

This support was particularly marked in the field of labour relations. In response to Aguirre Cerda's requests, in April 1939 the PCCh (together with the PS) agreed to a moratorium on the organisation of peasant unions, an activity which had increased spectacularly in the months after October 1938 and which had alarmed landowners and the right-wing parties considerably.(49) In early 1939, the PCCh also agreed, with minor reservations, to the creation of a series of special tribunals designed to find peaceful solutions to labour conflicts in a number of industries and paid some attention, though not much, to the problems of increasing production.(50) More generally, the PCCh called on its supporters to keep their labour conflicts within the Código del Trabajo and exhorted them to consider all conflicts from the perspective of whether or not they caused the government difficulty or embarrassment. Moreover, trade unionists were told that there was no excuse for illegal strikes now that a popular government was in power and they should, if possible,

(48) González Videla op. cit., I, p216.

(49) Frente Popular 5.4.1939.

(50) Ibid. 3.4.1939; 14.4.1939; 14.5.1939.

avoid striking altogether.(51) Partly as a result of the efforts of the PCCh - and the PS - there were fewer strikes in 1939 than in 1938, although the number of labour disputes increased from 248 (involving 48,078 workers) in 1938 to 525 (involving 104,048 workers) in 1939.(52) However, the government was also expected to play its part in maintaining industrial peace by persuading employers to grant favourable wage increases and to avoid unnecessary sackings.(53)

Although the PCCh gave its unconditional support to the government during 1939, it was not entirely uncritical of its performance. In July 1939, the party began to urge the government to take firmer steps to deal with the activities of its right-wing opponents and to pursue Popular Front goals with increased vigour - calls which were repeated after the Ariostazo in August 1939.(54) But in the final months of 1939, the PCCH dropped its mild criticisms of the government almost entirely and began to attack the inconformistas in the PS and elsewhere who were demagogically demanding precipitate action from the government.(55) The PS replied by wryly congratulating the PCCh for having acquired an 'admirable spirit of resignation'.(56) Thus, at a time when the PS was openly predicting that the Nazi Soviet pact

(51) Ibid. 22.4.1939; 25.12.1939.

(52) See Appendix D, for strikes during the Aguirre Cerda years. The statistics on labour disputes come from Estadística Chilena, March 1939 and May 1940.

(53) Frente Popular 8.11.1939; 11.12.1939.

(54) Ibid. 19.7.1939; 28.8.1939.

(55) Ibid. 28.8.1939; 4.11.1939. See also the resolutions of the PCCh's XI National Congress, December 1939 Por la Paz, por nuevas victorias del Frente Popular (Santiago) p18.

(56) Consigna 2.12.1939.

and the outbreak of the Second World War would produce a dramatic revision of the PCCh's policies similar to that which had occurred in early 1935, Chile was presented with the spectacle of a PCCh which energetically condemned the government's critics and with a PS which, partly in response to internal pressures, was becoming increasingly critical of the government. Although the PCCh took considerable satisfaction in dumbfounding its enemies and rivals by not proceeding to a dramatic revision of its policies in response to international events, its very inaction in that direction was a product of Comintern policy - a fact which the PCCh, to give it its due, made no attempt to disguise.

According to the Comintern, the Second World War, like the First, was the product of rivalry between competing imperialisms, neither of which deserved the sympathy or support of the working classes. On the contrary, the ruling classes of those nations embroiled in the war, with the support of social democrats and reformists, sought to ensure that the workers bore the brunt of the conflict. The Comintern predicted that the war would lead to a sharp increase in class antagonisms and that revolution would follow. As a result of this analysis, the Comintern gave the communist parties of the world two major tasks, firstly, to struggle against this 'predatory war' and secondly, to liquidate the influence of the social democrats and reformists in the working class movement, since these had shown by their support for the war that, in the final analysis, they were tools of the bourgeoisie and untrustworthy allies for the

proletariat.(57) For the Comintern then, the war marked the return to hard line policies similar to those which had prevailed during the Third Period. However, one class of communist party was specifically excluded from this re-orientation - those parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries which, in alliance with reformists and social democrats, were struggling for national liberation.(58) These parties, including the PCCh, were instructed to continue applying the Popular Front strategy which, with the advent of war, had acquired added significance and seemed to have greater chances of success. Not only would the imperialist nations be less able to block the path of movements for national liberation but, once these movements had been successful, they would deprive the imperialists of the economic resources and political support which they needed to prosecute the war.

So far as the PCCh was concerned, then, the reorientation of Comintern policy after the outbreak of the war demanded no drastic changes in overall strategy or in domestic policies. However, it did serve to redirect the party's attention to the fact that the goal of the Popular Front strategy was nothing less than the economic and social transformation of Chile and its liberation from imperialist tutelage and it was partly because of this renewed concern with fundamental objectives that the PCCh began to move away from the policy of unconditional support for the government. But by early 1940, there were also powerful domestic factors pushing the PCCh in

(57) World News and Views, London, 11.11.1939. See also, Frente Popular 4.11.1939 where the Comintern's manifesto for 7th November was re-printed.

(58) Ibid.

a similar direction. By that time, the very survival of the Front seemed to be threatened by dangers from both the Left and the Right. On the Left, the inconformistas challenged the unity of the PS and the integrity of the coalition while, on the Right, the government's retreat from Popular Front objectives and, in particular, the cabinet changes of February 1940, seemed to be a clear indication that the government was moving towards an accommodation with its opponents, an accommodation which would mean the total sacrifice of Front goals. Moreover, there was another powerful pressure which toughened the PCCh's attitude towards the government. During 1939, the PCCh had had considerable success in containing industrial unrest by persuading workers that restraint would enable the government to press ahead with the implementation of Front policies. But by early 1940, this argument was wearing thin since the government had few concrete achievements to its credit and, furthermore, as inflationary pressures increased, the PCCh was in danger of losing ground in the trade union movement to the more militant inconformistas both inside and outside the PS.

Although the PCCh continued to exhort the government to implement Popular Front policies, the party's retreat from unconditional support for the government was not accompanied by savage attacks upon it - indeed, such tactics could only have forced the government into more determined efforts to come to an arrangement with the Right. Rather the PCCh sought to rally the Popular Front parties around the government and to check its drift towards the Right by virulently attacking the Right in general and the Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura

(SNA) - the landowners' association popularly identified as the bastion of the Oligarchy - in particular.(59) Although some inconformistas accused the PCCh of deliberately trying to channel working class discontent away from the government, its attacks on the SNA were not well received by the government since the President himself was a wealthy landowner and two of his Radical ministers were members of the SNA.(60) Indeed, the two ministers had signed a manifesto condemning the PCCh for stirring up unrest in the countryside and although they were eventually forced to withdraw their signatures, La Nación (the government newspaper) took the PCCh to task for its totalitarian attitudes and defended the SNA as a respectable professional institution.(61)

It was at this time too, that the PCCh began to change its attitude towards industrial unrest. Once again, however, the PCCh did not unleash a full-scale industrial offensive. On the contrary, it continued to insist that, under the present regime, there was no place for illegal strikes and that conflicts should be kept within the Código del Trabajo.(62) But the PCCh also began to tell its supporters that there was no need to be passive in the face of government deficiencies and that they should be combative within the law.(63) Perhaps more ominous for the future development of labour relations, the PCCh also argued that the problems of increasing production should not be solved

(59) See, for example, Frente Popular 18.2.1940; 28.4.1940 for two savage attacks on the SNA.

(60) See Trabajo (Santiago) 3.5.1940 for the inconformista allegation.

(61) La Nación 25.4.1940; 28.2.1940.

(62) Frente Popular 2.2.1940; 15.2.1940.

(63) Ibid. 15.2.1940.

at the workers' expense but rather by the granting of wage increases which would expand demand.(64) But the net result of the PCCh's changing attitude towards industrial conflicts was not an upsurge of strike activity. According to the available statistics, there were fewer strikes during the first six months of 1940 than there had been during the same period of 1939 and it is also worth noting that there were no serious strikes in the industries where the PCCh had most influence, the coal and nitrate industries.(65) Nevertheless, the right-wing parties mounted a campaign denouncing the PCCh for stirring up labour unrest during the early months of 1940 probably in an attempt to prepare the way for the presentation, in July 1940, of a bill to Congress outlawing the PCCh.(66) Moreover, if the available statistics do not appear to support the allegations of the right-wing parties, two strikes (by newspaper and bread workers) in Santiago during March and April 1940 did appear to give substance to the Right's accusations. But these strikes were, in fact, supported by the CTCh, that is, by the PS as well as the PCCh, and in the case of the newspaper strikes (which affected all the major newspapers except for Frente Popular) the PCCh's efforts to find a prompt solution earned the opprobrium of the inconformistas.(67) If the PCCh was not guilty of launching the labour offensive as its enemies claimed, it was, in general, less willing

(64) Carlos Contreras Labarca La conspiración de los enemigos del pueblo (Santiago) February 1940, p10.

(65) See Appendix C for strike details.

(66) See, Sergio Fernández Larraín Traición! (Santiago, 1941) ppl3-151 for the congressional speeches of the bill's principal architect.

(67) Trabajo 17.3.1940.

to use its influence to contain industrial unrest and this alone was enough to strain relations with Aguirre Cerda.

However, it was differences over foreign affairs which placed the greater strain on relations between the President and the PCCh. Prior to the signing of the Nazi Soviet pact, the PCCh, in accordance with Soviet foreign policy, was favourably disposed towards the USA and the European democracies. But, after August 1939, the PCCh swiftly discovered that the European democracies were as nasty and perfidious as their German opponents and by the end of that year, the PCCh newspapers were giving greater coverage to propaganda against the Allies than they were against Germany. The PCCh's attitude towards the USA also cooled and, after the USA repealed neutrality laws enabling it to supply arms to the Allies, became openly hostile.(68) While the reversal of the PCCh's attitude towards foreign affairs earned it the hostile contempt of the PS, it did not place an immediate strain on the party's relations with the government.(69) Indeed, since Aguirre Cerda had declared Chile neutral at the outset of the war - a neutrality which was in complete accord with Comintern policy - the PCCh had an additional reason for supporting the government.(70) But, in the longer run, the war had consequences which sorely

(68) Frente Popular 28.10.1939.

(69) The PCCh most certainly did not suddenly begin to attack the government after the signing of the Nazi Soviet pact as James Petras suggests in Politics and Social Forces in Chilean Development (Berkeley, 1969) p124.

(70) Frente Popular 20.11.1939.

strained relations between the PCCh and Aguirre Cerda. In the first place, the war exacerbated Chile's economic difficulties causing unemployment and rises in the cost of living which fuelled worker unrest which the PCCh was increasingly reluctant to contain. Second, by closing Chile's traditional European markets, the war made the country increasingly dependent on the USA, the only power in a position - geographic and economic - to give Chile the help it needed to overcome the difficulties caused by the war. Thus, Chile became increasingly dependent on the USA and the PCCh regarded this dependence both as a threat to Chile's neutrality, since it was evident that the USA was being sucked into the war, and as an obstacle to the implementation of any fundamental reform which might affect US economic interests.

In July 1940, when the conference of American states called by the USA met in Havana to co-ordinate the economic, political and military defence of the continent, the PCCh was openly hostile to Chile's participation and its hostility increased when it became evident that the conference had taken resolutions to deal with 'subversive' threats.(71) But, recognising Chile's need for US economic aid, Aguirre Cerda and the other frentista parties were prepared to give the USA a measure of diplomatic support and co-operation and they found the PCCh's attacks on the USA both reprehensible and embarrassing.(72)

Thus, by July 1940, the PCCh and the government were drifting rapidly apart for both domestic and international

(71) Ibid. 22.7.1940.

(72) Consigna 6.7.1940; La Hora 23.7.1940.

reasons. Indeed, during that month, Aguirre Cerda declared privately that he wanted to end the PCCh's association with his regime but was prevented from taking action because of the right's determination to outlaw the PCCh.(73) However, it seems highly likely that he did take one step towards dissolving the link with the PCCh when he chose the Socialist minister of Fomento, Oscar Schnake, to lead the Chilean delegation to the Havana conference. Although Aguirre Cerda himself justified his selection of a junior Socialist Minister to lead the Chilean delegation to an important international conference in terms of not wishing to provoke yet another internal squabble in the PR, he cannot have been ignorant of the probable impact of the appointment of Schnake, one of the PS's most noted anti-communists, would have on PS-PCCh relations.(74)

Although the days of the Popular Front appeared to be numbered by July 1940, the coalition survived until December 1940 in its original form and until March 1941 without the PS. Between July and December 1940, relations between the PCCh, Aguirre Cerda and the PS fluctuated somewhat in accordance with events but in general they grew cooler.

In July 1940, Aguirre Cerda announced that the economic difficulties which the country faced were so serious that Chile had to 'organise or perish'.(75) Production had to be increased, sacrifices had to be made and the government would no longer countenance indefinite strikes or unnecessary sackings. Although the PCCh greeted Aguirre Cerda's declarations

(73) FOR FO 371/24182 A 2389/1/9, despatch Bentinck to Lord Halifax dated 10.7.1940.

(74) Alberto Cabero op. cit. p354.

(75) Frente Popular 11.7.1940. Manifesto, 'O organizamos o perecemos'.

with reserved approval, it became openly hostile when some of the effects of the government's new policies made themselves felt in the field of labour relations. In August 1940, the Minister of the Interior instructed the carabineros to keep strict vigilance on 'labour agitators' while later in that year, the internal security law was used against the leaders of railway workers' unions which had threatened to strike.(76) However, while the PCCh condemned these actions, it vigorously applauded the government for taking over a nitrate oficina which was threatened with closure in October 1940.(77)

As Chile's economic difficulties increased and as the government began to take a firmer line towards industrial unrest, the PCCh formally completed the process of reorientation which it had begun in early 1940. At the Ninth Plenary Session of the CC, held in late September and early October 1940, the PCCh criticised itself for its former policy of blanket support for the government and for its failure to deal with the vacillations of its allies as being both reformist and opportunistic.(78) The government, the PCCh claimed, was dominated by pro-reactionary elements and the only way forwards was for the workers and peasants to conquer the direction of the popular movement and to press for the fundamental transformations of Chile's society and economy which the Popular Front programme had promised. In future, the PCCh declared, it would continue to support the government but only to the extent that it pursued anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical policies. The PCCh also promised to work for

(76) Frente Popular 18.8.1940; El Siglo 17.10.1949, 15.11.1940.

(77) El Siglo 4.10.1940.

(78) Ibid. 6.10.1940.

unity of action with the PS and, most strikingly of all, stated that the party would go to the vanguard of the struggle of the workers for better pay and conditions.(79) The Ninth Plenum was the culmination of the process initiated by the Comintern after the outbreak of the war but was also, to some extent at least, the product of the PCCh's reaction to the genuine discontent inside the working class movement with the shortcomings and failures of the government. However, as the PS cynically pointed out, the PCCh's more militant attitudes were probably also due to the fact that the March 1941 congressional elections were fast approaching.(80)

Although neither the government nor the other fren-
tista parties seemed unduly alarmed by the harder line and aggressive tone of Ninth Plenum resolutions, both immediately before and after the Plenum there were clear signs of the growing estrangement between the PCCh and the government. A few days before the Plenum, the Communist Mayor of Valparaíso (the only official link of importance between the PCCh and the administration) was dismissed from his post while in Laguna Verde, just outside Valparaíso, Communists led an illegal strike of electricity workers.(81) After the Plenum there was an upsurge of industrial unrest as Communist labour

(79) Ibid.

(80) Consigna 9.11.1940.

(81) The Mayor, Pedro Pacheco, had been the object of constant attack from Socialist and other regidores for lack of attendance at council meetings, persecution on non-Communist municipal workers and profligate use of funds. Boletín municipal de Valparaíso 28.1.1939; 27.5.1940; 12.8.1940. But as one PCCh regidor claimed, Pacheco was probably the victim of the general deterioration of relations between Azuero Cerda and the PCCh; ibid. 8.11.1940. See Marcos Chanudes Chile, una advertencia americana pp103-107 for an account of the Laguna Verde strike.

leaders were given their heads. The first serious strike in the nitrate fields during Aguirre Cerda's presidency commenced in November and, in the south, the coal miners began to collect money for a strike fund.(82) The unsurge of industrial unrest alarmed the government, the PR, the PS and, apparently, the PCCh as well. Communist labour leaders were sent to the coalfields to ensure that the miners did not embark on strike action without due preparation and that they kept their conflict legal.(83) Moreover, at the CC's Tenth Plenum, held in January 1941, a number of labour leaders, particularly in Valparaíso, were condemned for precipitately unleashing a series of ill-prepared strike actions.(84)

Although the PS showed no undue alarm at Ninth Plenum resolutions, confining itself to a reasoned defence of Schnake's efforts to obtain US economic aid (which had come under fire in the Plenum), it reacted sharply when the PCCh tried to win over local Socialist groups to the idea of united action.(85) Moreover, in November 1941, the PS began to argue, with increasing force, that the PCCh could not maintain a foreign policy different to that of its allies and the government and expect to remain inside the coalition and in early December, the Socialist Minister of Health, Salvador Allende, provoked a brief eruption of public polemics between the PS and the PCCh by publicly condemning the Communists' labour and foreign policies.(86)

(82) El Siglo 10.11.1940; 23.11.1940.

(83) Police reported Salvador Ocampo making a speech to this effect in Lota. Archivo Dirección General del Trabajo, Providencias, 1941, Vol.11, Ref. no.3199, dated 9.12.1940.

(84) El Siglo 30.1.1941. Speech by Humberto Abarca.

(85) La Crítica (Santiago) 3.10.1940; Consigna 9.11.1940.

(86) Consigna 4.11.1940; La Unión (Valparaíso) 7.12.1940; El Siglo 9.12.1940.

Despite the increasing coolness between the PS and the PCCh in the final months of 1940, in early December, PS congressmen refused to vote for the right-wing measure designed to outlaw the PCCh and, indeed, prior to Schnake's return to Chile, the frentista parties had made some progress towards settling their differences.(87) On December 12th, the President of the PR announced that he had taken several successful initiatives to persuade the PCCh to respect the terms of the Popular Front pact and a little later, the PCCh claimed that the frentista parties had been so successful in ironing out their differences that they had even managed to produce an agreement on foreign policy which was acceptable to all the members of the coalition - including the PS.(88) Nevertheless, on December 15th, Oscar Schnake delivered a furious attack on the Communist International and on the PCCh. Declaring that the PCCh no longer had any right to speak on behalf of the working classes or to consider itself a friend of the PS, Schnake reclaimed liberty of action for the PS and presented the Front with the choice of either excluding the PCCh or losing the PS.(89) Although other Front parties responded by exhorting the PS to remain in the coalition and although there were some last minute efforts by Socialist leaders like Grove (who had evidently been caught unawares by the tenor of Schnake's speech) to save the coalition, Schnake was intransigent.(90) In January 1941, the

(87) El Siglo 7.12.1940.

(88) Ibid. 13.12.1940; 14.12.1940; 21.12.1940.

(89) La Hora 16.12.1940. Report on Schnake's speech.

(90) See, El Siglo 20.12.1940 and Raul Ampuero's La Izquierda en punto muerto (Santiago, 1969) p19. Grove made efforts to keep the PS in the Front until the end of December. El Siglo 28.12.1940; 30.12.1940.

Socialist delegates withdrew from the Front and a little later the PR also reclaimed its liberty of action.(91)

It seems highly likely that without Schnake's ultimatum and his attacks on the PCCh, the Front would have survived at least until after the March 1941 congressional elections. Why, then, did Schnake decide to destroy the Front and why did the PS go along with him? Firstly, it seems very probable that the termination of the PCCh's association with the government was part of the price which Chile had to pay for the US economic aid which Schnake had helped to negotiate. Although, not surprisingly, the PCCh favoured this explanation, it is also given some support by the British Ambassador in Santiago who reported to his superiors in London on December 14th that 'it appears that the US authorities are insisting on the elimination of Communism from the government before sponsoring any industrial loans to Chile'.(92) Moreover, such an insistence from the US government was consistent both with its own recent treatment of the US Communist Party and with Havana Conference resolutions on subversive threats.(93) Secondly, however, there were also powerful domestic reasons for Schnake's action. The PCCh's increasingly hard line policies were a direct threat to the PS's influence at a time when the cost of living was accelerating and when congressional elections were fast approaching. Furthermore, the PS was wearied by the PCCh's

(91) El Siglo 7.1.1941; 16.1.1941.

(92) FOR FO 371/25876 A 283/283/9, despatch Charles Orde to Lord Halifax, dated 14.12.1940.

(93) The Smith Act (June 1940) and the Voorhis Act (October 1940) forced the US Communist Party to limit its membership to US citizens and made links with the Comintern illegal. See, W.Z. Foster History of the Communist Party of the USA (New York, 1952) p392.

efforts to concert united action with local Socialist groups in defiance of the PS leadership's wishes. The PS's declaration of war on the PCCh, then, probably served a number of purposes. It helped Chile to meet US conditions for economic aid and it allowed the PS to satisfy its genuine and deep-seated hostility towards the PCCh; it helped to divert any dissatisfaction with the PS's continued participation in government towards the struggle with the PCCh and rallied the rank and file around the leadership. Finally, by breaking the Front, the PS probably hoped to destroy the 'unholy alliance' between the PR and the PCCh and to deal a mighty blow to the Communists' electoral ambitions.

If Schnake and the PS had powerful reasons for destroying the Front, so, too, did Aguirre Cerda. Indeed, prior to December 15th, Aguirre Cerda and the Radical ministers had given Schnake undertakings that they would do their best to keep the PR neutral in the coming battles and to swing the PR into an alliance with the PS and it might well be that Schnake would not have launched his offensive at the time he did without the encouragement and support of Aguirre Cerda.(94) Aguirre Cerda's reasons for wishing to see an end to the Front were similar to those of the PS but not identical. For Aguirre Cerda, the PCCh's move towards tougher policies during 1940 and Chile's increasingly pressing need for US economic aid simply converted the PCCh from a useful, if unsavoury, ally into an embarrassing liability to be disposed of at the first opportunity. However, Aguirre Cerda did not want a direct confrontation with the PCCh since this could produce

(94) La Hora 1.3.1941. Letter from Schnake to Aguirre Cerda.

an explosion of industrial unrest which the country could ill-afford and further embitter his relations with the PR. Thus, Schnake's decision to force a breach with the PCCh presented him with considerable advantages; it ensured that the PS and not the government bore the brunt of Communist hostility and it avoided immediate complications with the PR.

The break-up of the Popular Front was not the signal for violent Communist attacks on the government nor for any sustained campaign to promote industrial unrest. Although coal production (an industry dominated by Communist trade unions) fell in early 1941 and although there was a record number of strikes in January, by the end of that month, the PCCh was again insisting that disputes should be conducted within the Código del Trabajo and that precipitate strike actions should not be launched.(95) Partly as a result of the PCCh's efforts, strikes tailed off after January and by March, coal production was almost back to normal(96)

The reasons for the PCCh's restraint lay primarily in the now vital need to maintain the alliance with the PR. Without the PR, the PCCh ran the risks of losing electorally in the March 1941 congressional elections and of being forced into complete isolation, which might well have resulted in a return to clandestinity and the loss of all the gains made since 1935. To avoid this danger, the PCCh courted the PR

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- (95) Humberto Abarca Como organizar la victoria (Santiago, 1941) p23. (Report to the Plenum, CC PCCh) The fall of coal production occasioned a government enquiry, headed by General Bercuño. See below, p256-7.
- (96) See Appendix C for the strike pattern in early 1941. Coal production for March 1941 showed an increase over that for March 1940 - but was still below that for March in 1937, 1938 and 1939. See Estadística Chilena, April for all the years mentioned.

with fresh vigour, curbed its attacks on the government, offered the PR advantageous terms for the March elections and restrained its supporters in their struggle for better wages and conditions. Indeed, according to one Socialist, in its efforts to remain on good terms with the PR, the PCCh even offered to submit all the labour conflicts in which it was involved to Radical scrutiny and approval.(97)

However, the passage through the Senate of the bill outlawing the PCCh probably also imposed restraint on the party - at least until Aguirre Cerda formally vetoed it in late February 1941 - as did the activities of the Minister of the Interior, Arturo Olavarría Bravo.(98) Given a brief by Aguirre Cerda to clamp down on political and industrial unrest, Olavarría Bravo harassed the press, including the Communist El Siglo, prevented strikes in the public service industries and prosecuted Communist labour leaders, amongst others, under the internal security law.(99)

The restraint which the PCCh showed towards the government during early 1941, contrasted sharply with the bitter hostility it showed towards the PS. In January 1941, the PCCh declared that Schnake and his 'henchmen' were the 'new shock brigade of the reactionary right', doubly dangerous because of their leftist face.(100) What amounted to a civil war ensued within the working class movement, accompanied on both sides by press campaigns of singular virulence, by physical violence and by a desperate struggle for elective

(97) Consigna 1.2.1941. Article by Rudolfo Borzutsky.

(98) El Siglo 16.1.1941. El Mercurio 22.2.1941.

(99) El Siglo 5.1.1941; 18.2.1941; 10.5.1941.

(100) Ibid. 4.2.1941. Speech by Contreras Labarca to the X Plenum.

office both in the congressional and municipal contests of March and April 1941 and in the trade union elections which followed in May and June.(101) It was not until the end of July that hostilities between the two parties began to diminish and they left a taste of bitterness which lingered on for some time.

If the PS entertained any real hopes that the PR could be plucked from its old association with the PCCh after the Popular Front Coalition had been destroyed, these were swiftly dashed. The PS was unwilling to offer the sort of electoral advantages which the PCCh was eager to give with the result that the PR chose to fight the March 1941 congressional elections with the PCCh and less important exfrentista parties.(102) However, after those elections, the PR did begin to move towards an accommodation with the PS, making pacts with the Socialists to co-operate in the elections of the presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies and in the elections of alcaldes on municipal councils; in June, the two parties made a general pact for mutual political and electoral support.(103) It says much for the PCCh's continued need for its alliance with the PR that it accepted the growing rapprochement between the PR and the PS with little public protest. However, such was the strength of the links between the PCCh and the PR's rank and file - or such was the strength of factional strife inside the PR -

(101) The battle in the trade union movement was particularly vicious. See La Crítica 3.4.1941; 8.4.1941; 28.4.1941; 12.5.1941; 15.5.1941; 7.6.1941 for Socialist attacks - El Siglo responded in kind.

(102) El Siglo 16.1.1941.

(103) La Nación 16.5.1941; 25.6.1941.

that these pacts soon ran into difficulties. The Radicals of Santiago, for example, preferred to support the Communist sponsored PST candidate, Godoy Urrutia rather than the Socialist candidate, who had official Radical support, in a congressional by-election in July 1941.(104) But despite such set-backs, the PS and the PR gradually moved closer together and the PCCh found itself increasingly at the margin of the mainstream of political events.

The German invasion of Russia on June 22nd 1941 did not bring the PCCh's drift into isolation to an immediate halt, nor did it bring any immediate changes in the PCCh's domestic policies. In the days after the invasion, workers were informed that the best way to help Russia was to continue their struggle against the Oligarchy, imperialism and its 'Schnakist agency' and to continue to press for the satisfaction of their just demands for improved wages and conditions.(105) Despite such declarations, the PCCh became markedly less hostile towards the PS after the end of July 1941 and rather less passionate in its defence of workers' demands for better wages and conditions and even more circumspect in its criticisms of the government. Although the changed international conditions were probably the important factor in the PCCh's low profile during the winter of 1941, domestic factors also played their part. The publication of the Berguño report (which indicted the Communists as the principal cause of a decline in coal production during the early months of 1941) coupled with an

(104) Ibid. 10.7.1941.

(105) El Siglo 25.6.1941; 5.7.1941.

attempt by the right-wing parties to exclude Communist representatives from Congress, imposed caution on the PCCh.(106) Indeed, it was probably because the PS refused to vote for that measure, on the request of the PR, that the PCCh dropped its attacks on the PS.(107)

By the end of July, the PCCh had also given clear indications of the new priorities which the changed nature of the war had given the party. On July 31st, the PCCh announced the creation of a new coalition, the Unión Democrática Antinazifacista de Chile(UDACH) which was intended to appeal to even broader sectors than the old Popular Front.(108) Significantly, the UDACH had none of the reform objectives of the Front but was, instead, dedicated to the defence of democratic liberties and the maximisation of Chile's contribution to the Russian and Allied war effort.(109)

The PCCh completed the formal re-orientation of its policies begun in July, at the Eleventh Plenum in October 1941. Although the Plenum showed some concern for the problem of rising prices, by then gaining momentum, it showed none for the cause of fundamental social and

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- (106) See El Mercurio 25.7.1941 for a resumen of the Berguño report. Although the General blamed the PCCh for the fall in coal production even he commented on the appalling working conditions and the lack of medical and social security provision. Indeed, rather than any active agitation on the part of the PCCh, it seems likely that the fall in coal production was simply the result of the party lifting the pressures it had previously exerted to maintain industrial peace during 1939.
- (107) La Nación 30.7.1941.
- (108) El Siglo 31.7.1941.
- (109) Andrés Escobar Díaz Unidad Nacional contra el facismo y en defensa de la democracia y la patria. Report to the XI Plenum CC PCCh, Santiago, October 1941, p22.

economic reform but again re-iterated its commitment to the Allied cause and enjoined its workers to press for the rupture of commercial and diplomatic relations with the Axis and the elimination of nazi-fascist elements in Chile.(110) Although the Plenum did not exhort the Communists to avoid strike actions altogether, El Siglo soon made it plain that, in future, the strike was to be used as the weapon of final resort.(111)

But the PCCh's new policies did nothing to end the isolation into which it had been thrust by the growing co-operation between the PR and the PS. Indeed, both of those parties refused to join the UDACH and it was not until after the resignation and death of Aguirre Cerda in November 1941 that the approach of new presidential elections allowed the PCCh to edge its way back into the mainstream of Chilean politics once more.

Although the PCCh may not have refused cabinet office with the specific intention of leaving itself in a position to profit from both the successes and the shortcomings of the Aguirre Cerda administration, this was, in effect, what happened. The PCCh profited from the very real support and sympathy which Aguirre Cerda enjoyed during his first year of office and continued to benefit as this sympathy began to dissipate and as the internal disarray of the PS and the PR became increasingly obvious. Absent from cabinet and high government office, the PCCh took little of the blame for the government's failures and shortcomings.

(110) Ibid. p31.

(111) El Siglo 26.11.1941.

Yet the PCCh received few of the spoils which a member of a coalition which had elected a President of Chile could normally expect. While the PR and the PS took the lion's share and while even small frentista parties like the Radical Socialists and the Democrats sometimes enjoyed cabinet office, the PCCh was given only three posts of any significance at all. Pedro Pacheco was made Mayor of Valparaíso by Aguirre Cerda while other Communists were appointed to the boards of two state agencies - the Junta de Exportación Agrícola (JEA) - which, amongst other functions controlled the prices of bread and wheat, and the Caja de Seguro Obrero, concerned with workers' health and social security benefits. (112) Although the appointment of Pacheco - a leader of the 1931 Naval Mutiny - to the Mayoralty of Valparaíso, Chile's principal naval and commercial port, afforded the PCCh considerable emotional satisfaction, none of these posts gave the party much real power. Nevertheless, Pacheco and the other PCCh appointees used what influence they had to secure jobs for other party members - indeed, Pacheco's blatant favoritism was a constant cause of friction between the PCCh and other frentista parties on the Valparaíso municipal council. (113) Partly because of their efforts, partly because some Radical Ministers also appointed

(112) For details of Pacheco's early life and career, see Frente Popular 28.3.1939. After being Mayor of Valparaíso and a CC member (1939-41) he drifted away from the PCCh. The two other Communist presidential appointees were Contreras Labarca (JEA) and Manuel Muñoz (Caja de Seguro Obrero).

(113) See Footnote 81.

Communists to jobs but mainly because Communists were no longer automatically personas non gratas when it came to normal recruitment to the civil service, the influence of the PCCh in the public administration grew during the Aguirre Cerda years - though not, by any means, dramatically.(114)

Although the PCCh did not receive its proper share of the spoils, it was well rewarded in other ways. In the first place, Aguirre Cerda performed a number of political favours for the PCCh. He publicly invited the PCCh to serve in government and the invitation, if insincere, set the seal of respectability on the PCCh. Moreover, on a number of occasions Aguirre Cerda publicly defended the PCCh from furious right-wing attacks and he vetoed the bill which the Right pushed through Congress to outlaw the PCCh.(115) According to Ravines, Aguirre Cerda permitted Spanish refugees to settle in Chile at the express request of the PCCh - although, since their cause was popular enough amongst all the frentista parties, that permission may not have been given specifically to satisfy the PCCh.(116) The British Ambassador to Santiago alleged, also, that Aguirre Cerda's refusal to sign a Pan American declaration condemning the Russian invasion of Finland was the result of PCCh pressure.(117) Finally, in April 1941, Aguirre Cerda reduced sentences of exile on three Spanish refugees to relegation inside Chile on the request

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- (114) According to Luis Palma Zúñiga Pedro Aguirre Cerda p161, the Radical Minister of Foreign Relations, Abraham Ortega, gave 4 Communists jobs - although what jobs, he does not make clear.
- (115) Frente Popular 21.5.1940; El Siglo 22.10.1940; El Mercurio 22.2.1941.
- (116) Eudocio Ravines La Gran Estafa p486.
- (117) FOR FO 371/24182 A 1115/1115/9, Charles Bentinck to Lord Halifax, 31.1.1940.

of the PCCh.(118)

Rather more important than these favours, however, were the advantages which accrued naturally to the PCCh from having a government in power which was not actively hostile to it. Although there were isolated incidents of harassment, the PCCh was able to operate with a freedom it had not known before and was able to approach the authorities on behalf of its supporters and expect, if not action, at least a sympathetic hearing. Similarly, the PCCh - like the PS - was able to profit from the explosion of trade unionism during the Aguirre Cerda administration when... the number of unions rose from 932 with 125,978 members in 1938 to 1,985 unions with 208,775 members in 1941.(119)

Finally the PCCh enjoyed a number of fringe benefits from its association with the government - loans and credit facilities from both private and state agencies became easier to obtain and the party press began to receive a share of government advertising revenue.(120) Indeed, even private companies like Braden Copper and Yarur (textiles), in the past the object of furious Communist attack, occasionally felt it worth their while to take out advertisements in the PCCh press.(121)

The benefits, direct and indirect, which the PCCh received from its association with the government resulted in a dramatic increase in the party's electoral support and

(118) El Siglo 22.4.1941. The refugees were evidently being deported at the request of the Spanish Ambassador.

(119) Estadística Chilena June 1947.

(120) Eudocio Ravines op. cit. p485.

(121) Frente Popular 16.9.1939; 21.11.1939.

membership. In congressional elections in 1937, the PCCh polled 17,162 votes (4.16% of the votes cast) and elected one senator and six deputies; in 1941, it polled 53,144 votes (11.8% of the votes cast) and elected three senators and sixteen deputies.(122) Similarly, in April 1941, the PCCh elected 122 regidores as opposed to 42 in April 1938.(123) The available evidence indicates that, if anything, the growth of the party's membership was even more dramatic. Contreras Labarca reported in December 1939 that the membership had grown by 'various tens of thousands' during that year and cited the particular case of Lota where, he claimed, membership had leaped from 82 to 4,000.(124) In April 1940, the Chilean delegate to a Mexican Communist Party National Congress claimed that the PCCh had grown from a thousand members prior to 1935 to a current 50,000 members.(125) Galo González, in October 1940, also claimed a membership of 50,000.(126)

However, since in normal circumstances it is almost axiomatic that a party's electoral support is much greater than its membership and since the PCCh only polled 53,144 votes in March 1941, it seems likely that the claim of 50,000 members was an exaggeration. There were, after all, powerful reasons to exaggerate membership gains; firstly, to impress

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- (122) Germán Urzúa Valenzuela Los Partidos Políticos Chilenos p86.
(123) El Siglo 9.4.1941. No official statistics of PCCh votes appear to have been published for the 1941 municipal elections.
(124) Contreras Labarca Por la paz, por nuevas victorias p64.
(125) World News and Views, 20.4.1940. Article by Bell Keats 'The Congress of the CP of Mexico'.
(126) Galo González La Lucha por la formación del PCCh (Santiago, 1958) p52. This work is a compilation of various speeches and articles by González.

the Comintern and other Communist parties as to the scale of the PCCh's success and, secondly, to remind other Chilean parties that the PCCh was an electoral ally worth having. Nevertheless, if the 50,000 figure is taken to include the Juventudes Comunistas(JJCC) which claimed a membership of 5,000 in Santiago alone in December 1938 - that is, at the beginning of a period of massive membership gains for the PCCh - it is not altogether impossible that the 50,000 figure may have been roughly accurate.(127) In which case, the membership of the PCCh proper might well have been in the region of 25,000 to 30,000 during 1939/40. Which ever estimate is accepted, the PCCh experienced dramatic growth during 1939 by any criterion and since it was reported to the XII National Congress in December 1941 that membership remained roughly that which it had been in December 1939, it seems that the party managed to hold on to the bulk of its recruits.(128) Certainly, although there is some evidence to suggest that membership did fluctuate at times, it was not a problem which loomed large in the party's pre-occupations during the Aguirre Cerda years.(129)

If the precise scale of the PCCh's growth between 1938 and 1941 is difficult to gauge, so too, is the social character and the geography of the expansion. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the PCCh grew rapidly in those areas where its electoral support expanded. In

(127) Mundo Nuevo, Santiago, 1st week December, 1938.

(128) Principios, December 1941. Article by Humberto Abarca, p7.

(129) Humberto Abarca commented on fluctuations in membership to the X Plenum in January 1941, but it was not a topic which caused much concern. El Siglo 31.1.1941.

which case, a comparison of the results of the 1937 and 1941 congressional election results suggests that the party grew most in Santiago, the mining zones of the North and South, Coquimbo and, also, in some rural provinces like Curicó and Talca.(130) With regard to the social character of the expansion, the PCCh probably continued to have most appeal for workers, skilled and unskilled, but, at the same time, it made some gains amongst white collar workers and peasants.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that there was some friction between old members and new recruits the PCCh apparently absorbed this massive influx of new members with little difficulty.(131) Certainly, the PCCh does not appear to have suffered from serious internal conflicts, sharp fluctuations in membership nor, indeed, from any real challenge to the authority of the CC during the Aguirre Cerda years.

The internal harmony which the PCCh apparently enjoyed between 1938 and 1941 was the product of many factors. Firstly, its political line did not place severe stress on the loyalty of the membership. Thus, the party's drift towards tougher policies during 1940 seemed to be amply justified by domestic events and by the increase of inflationary pressure - and, indeed, the recruitment gains reported in the months following the IX Plenum of October 1940 suggest that the party's harder line was generally popular.(132)

(130) See Appendix F.

(131) See, for example, Contreras Labarca's Unidad para defender la victoria, Report to the VI Plenum CC PCCh, November 1938, Santiago, p24; and Consigna 18.1.1941 for evidence of friction between new and old members.

(132) El Siglo 31.1.1941. Between October 1940 and January 1941, the PCCh claimed 4,000 new recruits.

Furthermore, at no time did the PCCh repeat its cardinal error of the early 1930s and engage in bitter confrontations with the government and its most likely allies at the same time.

Secondly, the CC took steps to secure its own authority and to avoid unnecessary friction. Thus, during 1939 and for much of 1940, the CC made no severe demands on the new members, showing far more concern for even greater recruitment and with raising funds to finance the expansion of the party than with the inculcation of bolshevik ideological and organisational norms. At the same time, the CC took steps to improve its own internal organisation. In December 1939, the CC expanded its ranks to include 32 full and 10 alternative members creating the largest and, in social and geographic terms, probably the most representative CC the PCCh had had since its foundation.(133) Nonetheless, the expanded CC was comprised entirely of members who had been active either in the party or one of the Front organisations since the early 1930s and the one new member of the CC's important Political Commission, Humberto Abarca, had, in fact been a CC member in 1932.(134) Thus, although the PCCh had grown enormously since 1935, control remained

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- (133) The new CC included 2 doctors, 2 industrialists, teachers, white collar workers as well as workers and trade union leaders in the printing, railway, baking, coal, copper, nitrate and metallurgical industries. It also included two peasant activists, 4 congressmen, 2 mayors and 4 regidores. El Popular, Antofagasta, 3.1.1941.
- (134) El Siglo 20.2.1941. See Appendix E for Abarca's biographical details.

firmly in the hands of the older generation of party activists and, moreover, in the hands of a small group amongst that generation, comprised of Lafertte, Contreras Labarca, Galo González and their immediate followers. Indeed, with the success of the Popular Front strategy, this group was probably far more secure from external challenge than it had ever been before.

Probably the most important single step which the ruling group took to enhance its authority and to educate and assimilate the new members was the initiation of a purge in the early months of 1940. This purge, which began quietly in April 1940, reached its climax at the IX Plenum in October and ran parallel to the PCCh's adoption of a generally tougher political line. In response to Comintern directions to correct its internal weaknesses, Contreras Labarca announced in April 1940 that the PCCh had begun to examine the conduct of Communists who had been appointed to central and local government office.(135) As a result of this examination, the cases of the Mayor of Iquique, the PCCh consejero to the Caja de Seguro Obrero and the secretary to the Gobernador of La Calama - accused variously of drunkenness, lechery and of being 'vulgar bureaucrats' - were sent to the Control Commission.(136) However, it was not until the IX Plenum that the purge began to acquire a national dimension. At that Plenum, Galo González (head of the National Control Commission), taking as his example the

(135) Frente Popular 6.5.1940.

(136) Ibid.

deliberations of a recent Congress of the Mexican Communist Party, examined the PCCh for evidence of Trotskyism, masonry and 'counter-revolutionary immorality'.(137) Although González found little convincing evidence of Trotskyist influence inside the party, he was more successful - though hardly more convincing - when he turned to examine the nefarious activities of the masons. According to González, masons had introduced false concepts of tolerance and class collaborationism in the party and the Front, they had sought to win converts inside the party, sabotaged the work of various regional and local committees and had led some PCCh officials astray.(138) In future, González announced, membership of a masonic order would be incompatible with membership of the PCCh.(139)

Turning to the question of 'counter-revolutionary immorality' - moral laxity which laid members open to exploitation by class enemies - González announced that the three cases presented to the Control Commission in April had been decided in favour of expulsion and that two regidores had been expelled for similar offences.(140) However, the expulsion which caused most impact, both inside and outside the party, was that of Marcos Chamudes - ex-student leader, one-time personal assistant to Contreras Labarca, PCCh Deputy for Valparaíso from 1937 and founder and editor of a PCCh news-magazine Qué Hubo. Despite having held responsible positions on the CC since he joined the party in

(137) Galo González op. cit. p24.
(138) Ibid. pp28-34.
(139) Ibid. p34.
(140) Ibid. pp35-36.

1931, Chamudes was now found to be 'corrupt, depraved, full of duplicities (and) unworthy of belonging to the PCCh'.(141)

After October 1940, the purge was extended to the provinces and continued well into 1941. Although the total number of victims claimed by the purge was probably not more than a couple of hundred, each local and regional committee was vetted by the Control Commission and generally lost one or two members in the process. However, in a few cases, the casualty rate seems to have been considerably higher - in Antofagasta, for example, only two out of fourteen members of the CR appear to have survived.(142) Whether or not the CC initiated the purge with the precise intention of preventing the emergence of any challenge to its authority, the vast majority of victims seems to have come from that sector from which such a challenge was most likely to have come - members who had been active since the early 1930s and who held posts of responsibility in the organisation.

Apart from enhancing and securing the authority of the CC, the purge was clearly intended to identify and discipline individual scapegoats for the 'errors' which the party had fallen into during 1939. The attacks on masonry and the 'rotten liberalism' which it had smuggled into the party were, in fact, attacks on the political line which the PCCh had pursued in 1939 and on the men most closely identified with it. Thus, in the IX Plenum, Secretary General

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- (141) El Siglo 30.9.1940. See Marcos Chamudes El Libro Blanco de mi Leyenda Negra (Santiago, 1964) pp6-26, for his account of his expulsion.
- (142) Comparison of membership of the CRs elected in Antofagasta in December 1939 and November 1940. El Popular 5.12.1939; El Siglo 15.11.1940.

Contreras Labarca and his assistant, Raul Barra Silva - both evidently masons - were heavily criticised. (143) Similarly, while Chamudes was ostensibly expelled for 'counter revolutionary immorality', he too, had become heavily identified with the old 'erroneous' political line. Indeed, in many cases, as well as that of Chamudes, victims of the purge were accused of a mixture of political and moral offences and while it may have been true that in some instances moral laxity did lead to political error, the suspicion remains that the PCCh was attempting to achieve the total 'liquidation' of the purge victims by proving that they were not only mistaken but also corrupt.

The suspicion also remains that the tougher political line adopted by the party during 1940 and the purge itself were used by factions on the CC to settle old scores. Thus, Chamudes, who had been recruited into the Peruvian Communist Party by Ravines when a student in Lima and who had eventually become an enthusiastic adherent to the new political line brought to Chile by Ravines, may have been purged, in part at least, because the ruling group on the CC wished to repay the indignities which Ravines had heaped upon them by getting rid of one of his protegés. (144) Moreover, although the evidence of differences inside the ruling group is sparse, it may be that Galo González used the PCCh's re-orientation during 1940 to clip the wings of Contreras Labarca, who appears to have gained a certain ascendancy over the CC during 1939 and who certainly received an

(143) El Siglo 6.10.1940.

(144) See Marcos Chamudes Chile una advertencia americana pp44-50.

unusual degree of personal praise in the party press during that year.(145) Indeed, it may have been partly because of a subterranean struggle between Contreras Labarca and Gonzáles that there was an abnormally high rate of turnover in the CC membership between 1939 and 1941. Of the 42 CC members elected in 1939, only 20 were re-elected in December 1941.(146) However, of the 22 not re-elected only one, Barra Silva, can be positively identified as a personal adherent of Contreras Labarca and rather more appear to have lost their seats because of left-wing deviations or just plain inefficiency.(147) Moreover, since the 1941 CC had ten fewer members than the 1939 CC, it may be that a good proportion of those not re-elected lost their seats because the decision had been taken to reduce the CC to a more manageable size rather than because of any political or factional struggle.

The purge which the CC undertook in 1940 and 1941 was merely the most dramatic feature of a concerted effort to give the PCCh an organisational machine suited to its expanded size and increased importance. Along with exhorting

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- (145) See, for example, the articles (and poem by Nicanor Parra) praising Contreras Labarca on his birthday in 1939. Frente Popular 27.11.1939. While Recabarren had received even more extravagant praise during and after his lifetime, apart from Contreras Labarca, no other Communist leader was so treated in the 1930s and 1940s.
- (146) See, El Siglo 2.1.1942 for the CC elected in December 1941.
- (147) Raul Barra Silva was one of the few who defended Contreras Labarca in December 1945 when he was effectively demoted from the Secretary Generalship. See Chapter 6, pp322-325. 3 CC members not re-elected in 1941 were criticised at the X Plenum (January 1941) for refusing to co-operate with Democrats to impede the election of Trotskyists at a provincial CTCh Congress - a left-wing deviation. El Siglo 30.1.1941.

the membership to exercise 'revolutionary vigilance' to the full, Galo González also turned his attention to more traditional problems. At the IX Plenum, González announced that the CC was over-bureaucratic, over-specialised and did not work collectively.(148) Similarly, the cell structure suffered from serious defects - many met irregularly, others were still organised on a geographical rather than a plant basis and in some plants, blue and white collar cells operated independently of one another. Finally, González called for an ambitious policy to promote new cadres and to dispense with excessive familiarity between members which was inimical to good discipline.(149)

Concern with the proper functioning of the party's organisation dominated both the X Plenum of January 1941 and the XI Plenum of October 1941. According to Humberto Abarca in January 1941, the work of the CC was still not collective, members of the CC who lived in Santiago often had no contact with local trade unions or with the CR while the four CC members who lived in Valparaíso operated independently of one another.(150) CC members in other provinces failed to pursue party objectives with sufficient energy while in Chillán, a CC member had permitted factions to fight over the party's nomination of a congressional candidate and had refused to send electoral funds to the CC in Santiago.(151) Turning to the CRs, Abarca reported that most continued to operate on the energies of one or two

(148) Galo González op. cit. pp42-44.
(149) Ibid. pp49-50.
(150) El Siglo 30.1.1941.
(151) Ibid.

members who refused to delegate responsibility or train new cadres. Moreover, the CR Santiago, which had received most help from the CC, was in a sorry state; its work was 'stagnant' and mechanical - the fault, according to Abarca, of its Secretary who had packed the CR with personal friends.(152) However, despite Abarca's strictures on the party's organisational shortcomings, he reported that dues' payments had increased to an average of 50% in contrast to the 25% cited in December 1939 and he also reported that recruitment had improved in recent months.(153)

The proceedings of the XI Plenum in October 1941 were interesting for a number of reasons. In the first place, it became apparent that there had been some resistance amongst trade unionists on the CC to certain CC instructions. The Comisión Nacional Sindical had evidently refused to push for a CTCh conference as instructed, had maintained amicable relations with Socialist CDN members during the battles of early 1941 and had resisted instructions to 'democratise' (that is, give union office to non-Communists) in the unions under their control.(154) Secondly, the Plenum revealed that the purge initiated at the IX Plenum did not always have happy results. The CR Antofagasta, for example, which had been almost entirely renovated in November 1940, came in for harsh criticism for its lack of collective

(152) Ibid.

(153) Ibid.

(154) Principios November 1941 pp12-15. This last complaint was perennial - Contreras Labarca aired it as well at the VI Plenum in November 1939, see Unidad para defender la victoria, p35.

work, for regionalist tendencies and for a disposition to resist CC instructions.(155) Indeed, some of those chosen to fill posts left vacant by the purge had turned out to be as unworthy as their predecessors. Known drunkards had been appointed to a number of positions in local organisations in the North while the newly-appointed Organisation Secretary of the CR Atacama had been previously expelled from a Front organisation for embezzlement.(156) Despite the continued shortcomings of aspects of the party's activities and organisation, however, the Plenum reported that the CC's work, both individual and collective, had improved.(157)

It would seem then, from the proceedings of the various plenums held during 1940 and 1941, that the PCCh was still far from being the efficient, disciplined and professional machine of the Bolshevik ideal. Yet during those years the PCCh took important steps towards improving its organisation and it absorbed a massive influx of new recruits without serious upset. Thus, for the PCCh, the heritage of the Aguirre Cerda years was not only an expanded membership but the beginnings of an organisational machine which was to serve the party well in the future.

(155) Ibid. pp9-10.
(156) Ibid.
(157) Ibid.

Chapter 6

**President Juan Antonio Ríos, National
Unity and the War Years, 1942-1946.**

Juan Antonio Ríos governed Chile from April 1942 until his death in June 1946 but was forced, by illness, to hand over the day-to-day running of the administration to a Vice-President, Alfredo Duhalde, in January 1946.(1) Although Ríos had been a leader of the left-wing of the Radical Party in the 1930s, his regime was more conservative in style and character than that of Aguirre Cerda. Elected into office by a combination of parties which included the principal members of the Popular Front, Ríos had also received support from right-wing groups, including important sectors of the PL and he sought, throughout his presidency, to govern with Liberal help and co-operation. This determination to govern with Liberal support had several consequences; it helped to keep the right-wing parties in the disarray into which they had fallen after the March 1941 congressional elections and to prevent the emergence of a ferocious opposition of the type which Aguirre Cerda had had to face. But it also placed an increasing strain on Ríos's relations with the PR and the PS - and, indeed, helped to foment fierce internal struggles between the left and right wings of both parties. Conflicts inside the PS forced that party to withdraw from the cabinet in January 1943 and

(1) Alfredo Duhalde first served as Vice President in late 1945 when Ríos was visiting the USA but he did not begin to control the government until after January 1946. Luis Palma Zúñiga Historia del Partido Radical (Santiago, 1967) p232.

eventually led to the creation of the schismatic Partido Socialista Auténtica (PSA). (2) Similarly, conflicts inside and between the PR and Ríos led the President to dispense with formal Radical participation in his cabinets between July and September 1943 and from May 1944 until May 1945. (3) Although Ríos and the PR patched up their differences in May 1945 when Ríos finally agreed to form a cabinet without Liberals, their co-operation was shortlived. Ríos withdrew from public life in January 1946 and the PR soon fell out with the Vice President, Duhalde. Only after Ríos had died and new presidential elections had been held did the PR officially return to the responsibilities of cabinet office.

In contrast, Ríos's relations with the PCCh, initially cool, grew increasingly harmonious - at least while the Second World War lasted. However, this harmony was not the product of any profound agreement over the policies and conduct of the government. Rather, it reflected Ríos's difficulties with the PR and the PS and the policy decisions of the International Communist Movement (effective even after the Comintern had been formally dissolved in June 1943). After the German invasion of Russia in 1941, the Comintern had begun to urge support for the democracies and for the Allied war effort and had produced a new concept - National Unity - to replace the old Popular Front idea. (4) National Unity committed the PCCh to a policy of general support for the Ríos regime - a support which, although conditional and at

(2) See below, p285.

(3) See below, pp281-284.

(4) See below, pp288-289 for a fuller explanation of the National Unity concept.

times critical, became a source of increasing friction between the PCCh and the PR and PS as those two parties became more hostile to Ríos. However, as the Second World War ended and the Cold War began, the goals of National Unity changed; relations between Ríos and the PCCh cooled and by early 1946 the party had exchanged its policy of general support for one of general opposition and, indeed, was openly hostile to the Duhalde administration.

Although, while the war lasted, National Unity committed the PCCh to supporting an administration which was generally more conservative than that of Aguirre Cerda, on the whole the party managed to maintain its influence in both the electoral and trade union fields. Moreover, unlike the PR or the PS, the PCCh survived the war years without experiencing fierce internal conflicts and managed to make some progress towards creating a more professional and efficient party machine. Nevertheless, in December 1945, internal differences inside the ruling group on the Comité Central led to the effective demotion of Secretary General Contreras Labarca, although he was not formally removed from office until he was 'promoted' to the Ministry of Ways and Public Works in González Videla's first cabinet in November 1946.(5)

Before proceeding to examine the PCCh's actions and policies in greater detail, mention must be made of the economic problems which confronted Ríos; also more attention should be paid to his political problems since both helped to shape relations between the President and the PCCh during the war

(5) See below, pp322-326.

years.

The Second World War lay at the root of most of the economic problems which confronted Ríos during his administration. The war stimulated demand for certain of Chile's exports but it effectively limited the market place to the USA and the Latin American continent - although, despite the protests of the PCCh, which argued that goods exported to Spain found their way into the Axis war machine, there was also some trade with that country.(6) But only the USA was in a position to purchase Chile's copper in large quantities, with the result, according to some Chilean critics, that the country received low prices for its most important export.(7) Moreover, the war curtailed demand for Chile's other staple export, nitrates, forced up the price of imports and sometimes made the supply of essential commodities like petrol uncertain.(8) All in all, the war forced Chile to sell cheap and buy dear and, according to Roberto Wacholz, Gonzáles Videla's first finance minister, the war cost Chile some 14,000 million pesos.(9) Whether this claim was accurate or not, the economy did not flourish during the war years. Despite increases in coal and copper output between 1942 and 1944, the index for mining production fell steadily while industrial production did not surpass 1941 levels until 1946.(10) Only

(6) El Siglo 8.2.1943; 20.2.1943; 6.3.1943.

(7) See, for example, F. Durán El Partido Radical, p383.

(8) FOR FO 371/52007 A5656/52/9, report from Orde to Eden, dated 27.5.1942.

(9) FOR FO 371/52007 A58008/18/9, report from Leche to Bevin, dated 23.12.1946.

(10) See Appendix B for the indices of production. The fall in the mining index was caused mainly by the decline of nitrate production from 1.5 millions in 1942 to under a million tons in 1944. Estadística Chilena December 1949, p634.

agricultural production showed some tendency to increase over the same period.(11)

Inflation, however, was Ríos's most pressing economic problem. Caused by the rising price of imports and increases in government spending, the rate of inflation increased from 15.2% in 1941 to 25.6% in 1942 and 29.4% in 1943.(12) Although the rate dropped to 11.8% in 1944 and to 8.8% in 1945, it rose to 15.9% in 1946.(13) Wages tended to lag behind inflation and by 1943, real wages had declined by 15% since 1938.(14) While wage increases tended to be more in line with inflation after 1943, they did little to make up this loss of purchasing power.(15) As a result, there was a fairly strong undercurrent of labour discontent throughout the war years.

If the economic problems which faced Ríos were similar to those which confronted Aguirre Cerda, the political problems were different in one vital respect - Ríos did not have to contend with the furious opposition of a united and powerful Right. A left-wing Radical leader in the 1930s, Ríos had won the PR's presidential nomination in 1941 by adopting a conservative, anti-frentista and anti-Communist stance - a posture which proved crucial to his election to the

(11) See Appendix B.

(12) Aníbal Pinto, Chile, un caso de desarrollo frustrado p205.

(13) Ibid.

(14) A. Pinto 'Anotaciones sobre los efectos de la guerra en nuestra economía' Principios, July 1945.

(15) See Appendix D for an indication of the effects of this process in the important mining industries.

Presidency.(16) Determined not to become over-reliant on the Left, whether inside or outside the PR. Ríos insisted on incorporating Liberals into his government, even though the old frentista parties controlled Congress between March 1941 and March 1945 and even though they had provided the bulk of his support in the presidential elections. Indeed, Ríos probably agreed to form a cabinet based on the exclusive support of left and centre parties in May 1945 only because the Right had regained control of Congress in March and could be used to discipline the demands and actions of the left-wing government parties.(17)

Quite apart from Ríos's personal political leanings, however, there were good reasons for not forming an administration based exclusively on the old frentista parties when he took office. In the first place, there was a powerful anti-Ríos current in the PR and the experience of the Aguirre Cerda years suggested that fierce competition for government office and appointments would exacerbate factional strife and undermine the PR's stability and reliability.(18) Secondly, relations between the PS and the PCCh were still

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- (16) Ríos defeated his only rival in the 1942 presidential elections, General Carlos Ibáñez by 260,000 votes to 204,854 votes. Urzúa Valenzuela Los partidos políticos chilenos p86. Ríos claimed that right-wing parties gave him some 50,000 votes. El Siglo 22.4.1944; 27.4.1944.
- (17) After March 1945, the right-wing parties controlled 23 Senate seats and 75 Deputy seats; the left 22 and 72 seats respectively. FOR FO 371/44924, AS 3023/291/9, Santiago Chancery to South American Department, 22.5.1945.
- (18) Ríos only defeated González Videla, the left-wing candidate for the PR's presidential nomination in 1941 by 14,753 to 14,222 votes. La Crítica 16.12.1941. See, Chapter 5, pp226-229, for an account of internal struggles in the PR between 1938 and 1941 and their impact on Radical relations with Aguirre Cerda.

cool and no coalition like the old Popular Front existed to give Ríos even that minimal assurance of cohesive left-wing support. Moreover, when the PR, PS and the PCCh did manage to create a new coalition in October 1942 - the Alianza Democrático de Chile (ADCh) - it did not begin to function regularly until March 1943, by which time old tensions and rivalries, similar to those which had destroyed the old Popular Front, had already begun to emerge.

Whatever the exact reasons for Ríos's refusal to govern with the exclusive support of the old frentista parties - and he himself made much of the argument that the extraordinary conditions created by the war demanded that he seek the co-operation of all political sectors - his insistence on incorporating Liberals into his administration helped to alienate both the PR and the PS from his government. (19)

Although there were signs of Radical discontent with Ríos during 1942, it did not assume serious proportions until June 1943 when a group of fifteen left-wing Radical congressmen - who became known as the Young Turks - issued a manifesto attacking the President for giving Liberals plum cabinet posts, for failing to carry out a promised administrative purge (thus leaving semi-fiscal agencies under the control of right-wingers and ibañistas), for undue procrastination in severing Chile's links with the Axis powers and for failing to control prices and check speculation. (20) However, the main target of the Young Turks' attack was the Minister of

(19) See, for example, Ríos's letter to the PCCh in August 1944. El Siglo 4.8.1944.

(20) El Mercurio 3.6.1943.

the Interior, Raul Morales Beltrami, who, it was alleged, had used unscrupulous means to secure a pro-government majority on the JCR.(21)

Annoyed by the Young Turks' attack, uncertain of Radical support for important government legislation then before Congress and anxious that the Chilean military should not be tempted to emulate their colleagues who had recently seized power in Argentina, Ríos responded by dissolving the cabinet and forming another without the formal participation of the political parties.(22) Ríos's first cabinet of administration, which included two Armed Service chiefs, lasted from June to September 1943, when the PR was invited to return to cabinet again. Even though the new cabinet included two Liberals, thinly disguised as technocrats, the PR agreed.(23) However, left-wing radicals continued to gain ground and at the PR's National Convention, held in Concepción in January 1944, they managed to have their political resolution adopted as official PR policy. This resolution instructed the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional(CEN) - a new name and structure for the old JCR - to negotiate with Ríos for the formation of a cabinet based exclusively on either the ADCh parties or the PR and empowered the CEN to withdraw Radical support from his government if he proved recalcitrant.(24) In April 1944, the CEN approached Ríos in order

(21) Ibid.

(22) FOR FO 371/33754, A 6361/324/9, dispatch Charles Orde to Eden, dated 22.6.1943.

(23) La Hora 3.9.1943.

(24) El Mercurio 24.1.1944. The resolution was passed by 347 to 329 votes.

to implement the Concepción resolution and was rebuffed.(25)
The Radical Ministers were ordered to resign and although they complied, Ríos refused their resignations and they stayed in office - and were expelled from the PR.(26)

From May 1944 until May 1945, Ríos governed without official PR co-operation and, indeed, in September 1944, all attempts at compromise having failed, the PR declared itself to be in formal opposition to his government and instructed all Radicals who held government office as a result of their party affiliation, to resign.(27) Although few Radical office-holders complied, Ríos formed another cabinet of administration in October 1944 (which again included military men) and he and the PR remained at loggerheads until May 1945.(28) By that time, the PR's failure to impose its fiat on the Radical office-holders and the victory of the right-wing parties in the March 1945 congressional elections had altered the political climate. Ríos agreed to form an administration based on the ADCh parties and the centrist Falange Nacional(FN) while the PR accepted the inclusion of two technocrats in the cabinet.(29) But the peace between

(25) El Siglo 26.4.1944.

(26) Ibid. 27.4.1944; 28.4.1944; 30.4.1944.

(27) El Mercurio 12.9.1944.

(28) Only one Radical Intendente (out of 20) resigned and only 5 Radical consejeros in semi-fiscal agencies resigned. Cuenta de la actuación del CEN PR a la XVI Convención Nacional Ordinaria. Enero 1944-Enero 1946 (Santiago, 1946) p11.

(29) The Falange Nacional, formed by the social-christian current of the Partido Conservador in late 1938, was the precursor of the modern Partido Demócrata Cristiano. See George Grayson El Partido Demócrata Cristiano Chileno (Santiago, 1968) pp193-247 for an account of the FN's development and policies during Ríos's administration.

Ríos and the PR was uneasy and although prolonged by Ríos's absence abroad in late 1945, it broke down again in January 1946.

In that month, illness forced Ríos to withdraw from public life and he handed over power to another conservative Radical, Vice President Alfredo Duhalde. Duhalde, acting with Ríos's approval, took energetic steps to stem a rising tide of industrial unrest which had begun to affect the country in late 1945 - steps which provoked massive protest demonstrations.(30) When police opened fire killing eight demonstrators in Plaza Bulnes in Santiago in January 1946, a sequence of events was set in motion which resulted in the PR's resignation from cabinet and the exacerbation of factional strife between the left and right wings of the party.(31) After the left-wing Radicals had declared the PR to be in opposition to the Duhalde administration and had succeeded in winning the party's presidential nomination for their candidate, Gabriel González Videla, the right-wing Radicals left and created a new party, the Partido Radical Democrático (PRD).(32) Only after Ríos's death and González Videla's triumph in the September 1946 presidential election, did the PR return to the cabinet.(33)

While Ríos's relations with the PR closely resembled those of his predecessor, his relations with the PS were rather more cool and distant. Although the PS participated

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- (30) See Chapter 7, pp337-340 for a more detailed account of events in early 1946.
(31) Ibid.
(32) Although the PRD was formed by opponents of González Videla's candidacy, the new party pledged its support for his government in October 1946. La Hora 22.10.46.
(33) Ibid. 7.9.1946.

in the early cabinets, it had always maintained a critical attitude, towards Ríos's government and, in any event, lost much of its usefulness as an ally when fierce internal struggles led to its division and decline as a congressional force. Moreover, for much of the war years, Ríos found the PCCh a more useful - and cheaper - ally than the PS and thus the essential factor in the cordial relations between Aguirre Cerda and the PS - a common determination to curb Communist influence - was lacking.

Although personal rivalries and differing attitudes towards the PCCh and its policies had their impact on the factional struggles which afflicted the PS during the Ríos years, the central divisive issue was, once again, whether the party should participate in a government which showed little commitment to the cause of social and economic reform. Clashes between collaborationists and anti-collaborationists became marked in late 1942, and in January 1943 the Socialist ministers resigned from cabinet.(34) The struggle continued during 1943 but it was not until July 1944 that the collaborationists left and formed the Partido Socialista Auténtico(PSA).(35) After July 1944, then, there were two socialist parties; the PSA led by Grove which was prepared to collaborate with Ríos, almost regardless of terms, and the PS, by then led by Bernardo Ibáñez, which became increasingly critical of Ríos.(36) The split had a dramatic effect on

(34) See La Nación 13.10.1942 and El Mercurio 23.12.1942; 25.1.1943; 26.1.1943; 30.1.1943.

(35) El Mercurio 4.7.1944.

(36) Bernardo Ibáñez, the son of peasants, trained as a teacher and became active in the trade union movement, first as a member of the PCCh then as a Socialist. In 1944, he was also Secretary General of CTC. See C.T.Ch 10.9.1943 for details of his early career.

the PS's electoral fortunes and in the March 1945 elections it only managed to elect 6 deputies as compared with 17 in 1941; the PSA, for its part, elected 3 deputies.(37)

The PSA, despite its weak congressional following, was invited to participate in cabinet in May 1945 and the PS continued to become increasingly critical of the Ríos administration. However, as Cold War pressures began to make themselves felt in mid-1945, the PS also became increasingly critical of the PCCh. In July 1945, the PS adopted a policy of independence from both the government and the PCCh (the so-called Third Front policy) and in August threatened to withdraw from the ADCh unless the coalition adopted a more left-wing programme.(38) When the ADCh rejected the PS's ultimatum and added insult to injury by allowing the PSA to join its ranks, the PS left the coalition.(39) Although the Third Front policy was nominally concerned with the 'conquest of power and the implantation of Socialism', the PS allowed its anti-communism to drag it into the Duhalde government in January 1946 - an administration no less conservative than that of Ríos.(40) Ironically enough, by that time, the PCCh had embraced the left-wing policies and aggressive postures that the PS had been advocating in July and August 1945.(41)

Superficially at least, the election of Ríos to the

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- (37) Urzúa Valenzuela op. cit. p86. Estadística Chilena December 1945, pp708-725.
(38) J.C. Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, ppl87-192.
(39) La Opinión 7.8.1945.
(40) Agustín Álvarez Objetivos del Socialismo en Chile (Santiago, 1946) p2. The PS was given 4 portfolios in Duhalde's cabinet; agriculture, labour, health and the economy. El Siglo 3.2.1946.
(41) See below p292.

Presidency of the Republic did not bode well for the PCCh. Not only had Ríos made his anti-communist sympathies clear but the PCCh had continued to press the rival presidential claims of his most serious Radical opponent, González Videla, even after he had become the PR's official presidential candidate.(42) Indeed, the PCCh had endorsed Ríos's presidential candidacy only after it had become clear that, unless the Left united around a single candidate, General Ibáñez might well become Chile's next President. Despite their mutual distrust and dislike, however, domestic and international factors compelled Ríos and the PCCh to work together during much of his administration and, in some ways, their relationship, undistorted by artificial expectations on either side, was happier than that which had existed between the PCCh and Aguirre Cerda.

If national circumstance had been decisive in prompting the PCCh to support Ríos in the 1942 presidential elections, international factors appear to have determined the subsequent support and co-operation which the PCCh gave to his regime. Indeed, even before Ríos came to office, international events had shaped the broad lines of the policies which the PCCh was to pursue during his administration. The German invasion of Russia in June 1941 had, according to the Comintern, fundamentally transformed the Second World War from a sordid struggle for spoils between equally

(42) The PCCh finally declared for Ríos a month after he had won the PR's presidential nomination. El Siglo 18.1.1942. Interestingly enough, the PCCh had not been particularly enthusiastic about González Videla either because he advocated Chile's continued neutrality. Ibid. 5.12.1941.

rapacious imperialisms into a holy crusade for the defence of democracy, for the survival of the Soviet Union and for the very future of mankind.(43) In response to the changed nature of the war, the PCCh announced at its XI Plenum in October 1941, that the Popular Front strategy, which had governed its actions since 1935, had served its purpose and that, henceforth, the PCCh would be guided by a new concept - National Unity.(44) Unlike the Popular Front strategy, National Unity was not concerned with the advance or the acceleration of the revolutionary process in Chile and, in its initial formulations, it had no explicit reform objectives. Instead, National Unity had three major goals - the defence of democracy at home and abroad, the fulfilment of the resolutions of the Pan American Conference held in Havana in July 1940 (and later those of the Rio de Janeiro Conference held in January 1942) and the maximisation of Chile's contribution to the Allied war effort.(45) Although these objectives were to be realised by the creation of a vast popular movement around a political and electoral coalition like the Popular Front, National Unity was intended to appeal to a far broader political spectrum - including the parties of the traditional Right and those who had been 'hostile or indifferent' to the Front.(46) Indeed, the PCCh argued that the Second World War had made old distinctions between Left and Right irrelevant and that, in current

(43) A.I. Sobolev et al. Outline History of the Communist International, p477.

(44) Andrés Escobar Díaz Unidad Nacional contra el fascismo pp20-22.

(45) Ibid.

(46) El Siglo 31.12.1941. Speech by Contreras Labarca to the XII Party Congress.

conditions, the only valid distinction was between fascist and anti-fascist.(47) While the PCCh had, in fact, made isolated and half-hearted appeals to right-wing sectors in the name of the Popular Front, under National Unity these appeals became a permanent and prominent feature of PCCh policy - to the increasing chagrin of both the PR and the PS.

Despite the apparent differences between the Popular Front strategy and National Unity, the new concept proved to be just as flexible an instrument as the one it replaced. Thus, if National Unity began with no explicit reform objectives, it had, from the first, a reforming dimension and, as the war drew to its close, it acquired a series of reform goals.

The early reforming dimension of National Unity was the product of one of its central objectives, namely, the maximisation of Chile's contribution to the Allied war effort. In order to increase production of materials necessary to the Allies - and to meet Chile's own needs in a world market distorted by the war - the PCCh urged the government to plan and modernise the economy.(48) To that end, the PCCh called for the formation of a National Economic Council, to be financed by reforms in the tax system and by the seizure of assets from fascists and speculators.(49) The Council would ensure the most efficient use of Chile's resources and develop industrial, agricultural and mining production.

(47) Ibid. 22.6.1943. Anonymous article 'Ni derechas ni izquierdas; fascistas o anti-fascistas'.

(48) Ibid. 14.4.1942. Declaration by the Political Commission of the CC PCCh 'Movilización Económica para la Defensa Nacional'.

(49) Ibid.

While the PCCh predicted that the workers would profit from the planning and modernisation of the economy, these measures were not designed specifically to produce fundamental economic and social change. It was not until late 1944 that the PCCh turned its attention once more to the problems of radically transforming Chile's economy and society and, although the Comintern had been formally dissolved in June 1943, there can be little doubt that developments in the International Communist Movement and in Soviet policy were primarily responsible for the PCCh's renewed interest.

In November 1943, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill met at Teheran and committed themselves and their countries to collaborating in the creation of a more just, peaceful and prosperous world once the Axis armies had been defeated.(50) Extrapolating from the resolutions of the Teheran Conference, the U.S. Communist leader, Earl Browder, predicted that, just as Soviet Russia and the Allies would continue to co-operate after the war, the revolutionary process could be advanced by class collaboration rather than by class conflict.(51) In effect, Browder argued that the multi-class alliances which had come into existence to combat fascism should be maintained and even expanded to create a better world once the war had ended. To demonstrate the sincere desire of American Communism to collaborate with progressive

(50) Ibid. 7.12.1943; 8.12.1943.

(51) The PCCh summarised and elucidated Browder's ideas in numerous articles in El Siglo and Principios. The best single summary of them and their application to Chile can be found in El Siglo 31.1.1944, in an article entitled 'Iniciamos una nueva etapa histórica'.

forces from any quarter, Browder persuaded the CC of the Communist Party of the USA to disband the party and to re-group its members in a looser American Communist Political Association - intended to function as a pressure group within established American political parties.(52)

In line with Browder's ideas, the PCCh announced at its XV Plenum in August 1944 that a new historic stage was at hand; Chile would be thrust through the bourgeois democratic stage of its development with the assistance of all progressive forces - including those of the traditional Right.(53) Thus, although the XV Plenum marked the PCCh's return to a concern for fundamental change in Chile, it did not mark a return to aggressive hard-line policies or attitudes to either the government or the right-wing parties. On the contrary, the PCCh became less conditional in its support for the government in the final months of 1944 and it re-doubled its efforts to win over the progressive right.

However, in the early months of 1945, the PCCh's support for the government and its efforts to win right-wing support began to flag - primarily because the PCCh's collaborationism had encountered resistance in both the political and trade union fields. By mid-1945, there were signs of serious divergences between Russia and the Allies and in June, 'Browderism' was formally denounced by the French Communist leader, Jacques Duclos.(54) Although the PCCh

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- (52) Principios April 1944, report of Browder's speech.
(53) El Siglo 5.8.1944; 6.8.1944; 7.8.1944. Speech by Contreras Labarca in the XV Plenum.
(54) Duclos' letter to the CPUSA was re-printed in El Siglo 10.6.1945.

insisted on the validity of National Unity at its XVI Plenum in July 1945, it showed a greater concern with fundamental social and economic reforms than with collaborating with the government or the Right.(55) By the end of that year, National Unity had become an instrument for the acceleration rather than the appeasement or avoidance of the class struggle.

Although Ríos was reluctant, for reasons which were not without merit, to fulfil one pressing obligation of continental solidarity - namely to sever Chile's relations with the Axis powers - other National Unity objectives committed the PCCh to a general support for Ríos from the beginning of his administration.(56) After all, whatever his failings, Ríos had been elected democratically and he ruled, on the whole, with due respect to Chile's laws and Constitution. Moreover, the PCCh had nothing to gain and much to lose had Ríos been ousted from power since the most likely beneficiaries of such an event would be the extreme Right or ibañistas, who were even less favourably disposed towards the Allied cause than Ríos and, almost certainly, more hostile

(55) See, for example, the speech by Elías Lafertte to the XVI Plenum, Principios, July 1945. Amongst other reforms, Lafertte called for a thorough-going land reform (a topic hardly mentioned in the earlier 1940s) and the revision of contracts of foreign mining companies.

(56) See, Florencio Durán op. cit. pp334-354 for some of Ríos's reasons for not breaking-off relations with the Axis. Ríos's strongest argument was that rupture would not benefit the Allies in any practical way while it could adversely affect Chile.

to the PCCh and the working class movement.(57) Above all, howevermuch Ríos procrastinated over rupture with the Axis, Chile's mining products kept flowing into the USA and into the Allied war machine. Had the PCCh adopted a policy of vigorous opposition to Ríos, Chile's economic performance and its political stability could only have been adversely affected and its ability to contribute to the Allied war effort undermined. Since the maximisation of Chile's contribution to that war effort was a central objective of National Unity, the PCCh gave Ríos its political support and adopted labour policies designed to increase production and avoid industrial unrest.

However, the PCCh's support for Ríos was neither unconditional nor uncritical. Government actions and policies were measured against the current goals of National Unity and judged accordingly. Moreover, while the PCCh accepted that sacrifices had to be made in war time, it was determined that such sacrifices should not be borne by the workers alone and it expected the government to respect the workers' democratic rights and defend their standard of living.(58) Although the PCCh's support for Ríos fluctuated in accordance with his performance in both the domestic and foreign fields, the PCCh, unlike either the PR or the PS, never moved into formal opposition when he failed to live up to its expectations.

(57) According to the British Ambassador, for example, General Ibáñez received 30,000 US dollars from Germany for his presidential campaign chest and was generally thought to be pro-Axis. FOR FO 371/30434 A 326/18/9, dispatch Orde to Eden, 7.1.1942.

(58) El Siglo 2.4.1942.

Even when the government acted in accord with National Unity goals, the PCCh was not uncritical. Thus, although in 1942, the PCCh accepted the need for, and voted for, an Emergency Law giving the President the necessary powers to place Chile on a war footing, the party criticised certain of its provisions which limited the exercise of civil liberties and sought and received assurances that it would not be used to circumvent the Código del Trabajo and the right to strike.(59) Similarly, while the PCCh accepted a number of deals between Chile and the US Metal Reserve - the body which arranged the purchase of Chile's copper and other mining products - it was not uncritical of the terms agreed upon. In July 1943, for example, the party complained that a recent deal with the US Metal Reserve did not leave Chile with sufficient copper to meet its own needs and that this would have a profound effect on the economy and employment.(60) Significantly enough, however, the PCCh delivered the mildest of reproofs to the government for failing to protect Chile's interests and confined itself to expressing the pious belief that Chile could produce enough copper for its own and Allied needs.(61)

Ríos had reason to be grateful for the PCCh's support and co-operation, critical or not. Politically, the PCCh's insistence on support for his government and its advocacy of co-operation with the Right proved useful to Ríos in his struggles with the PR and, in a more general and

(59) Ibid. 25.4.1942; 7.5.1942.
(60) Ibid. 16.7.1943; 17.7.1943.
(61) Ibid. 17.7.1943.

negative sense, PCCh policy exacerbated frictions inside the ADCh and prevented the coalition from becoming an effective force capable of creating formidable problems for the government in Congress.

Although the maintenance of good relations with the PR, or at least its left-wing, had been a lodestone of the PCCh's actions during the Popular Front period, National Unity gave the PCCh other priorities. In 1942, the PCCh defended the Minister of the Interior, Morales Beltrami, from left-wing Radical attack on the grounds that, whatever his other faults, he was an advocate of rupture with the Axis.(62) After Ríos had broken ties with the Axis, the PCCh became more enthusiastic in its support for the government and more critical of the Radical left-wing. In June 1943, it found that the attacks of the Young Turks on Ríos were 'incomprehensible' and exhorted the PR to set aside its internal differences and unite behind the government.(63) Although the PCCh itself became more critical of the government in the latter part of 1943 - for reasons which will be examined later - it opposed the PR's drift into formal opposition to Ríos. Indeed, prior to the PR's January 1944 National Convention, one Communist Central Committee member attacked the left-wing thesis - that the PR should withdraw from government if Ríos did not agree to form a cabinet based on the exclusive support of the PR or the ADCh parties - as a 'nazi manoeuvre'.(64) Although the PCCh moderated the language of its criticism once the left-wing thesis had

(62) Ibid. 23.7.1942.

(63) Ibid. 4.6.1943.

(64) Ibid. 9.1.1944. Article by Juan Chacón Corona, 'Ante la Convención Radical'.

become official PR policy, it urged the Radical ministers not to resign if Ríos refused to re-organise his cabinet in the way the PR wanted.(65) Thus, even though the PCCh was itself committed to the formation of an ADCh cabinet and even though one of the reasons which Ríos gave for refusing to form such a cabinet was his absolute determination not to admit Communists to ministerial office, the PCCh opposed the PR's ultimatum to Ríos in April 1944.(66) After April 1944, when expelled Radical ministers continued to serve in cabinet, the PCCh encouraged such efforts as were made to find a solution but also supported the calls which the ADCh made for the creation of a cabinet based on its members.(67) However, with the XV Plenum in August 1944, the PCCh re-doubled its efforts to persuade the PR to return to cabinet and to co-operate with the PL and urged the PR to set aside the 'erroneous' Concepción resolution.(68) Since by that time, the PR was moving into open opposition to the government, Ríos greeted the XV Plenum resolutions with enthusiasm and praised the PCCh's 'perfect and patriotic intelligence' in seeing the need for a government of national unity which drew support from all 'progressive sectors.(69)

For all its efforts, the PCCh was unable to prevent the PR from declaring its formal opposition to Ríos in September 1944 and it is unlikely that PCCh pressure or influence

(65) Ibid. 25.1.1944.

(66) Letter from Ríos to Alfredo Rosende (President CEN PR), El Siglo 22.4.1944. As Rosende pointed out, however, the PCCh had already stated that it would not press for ministerial office if this was an obstacle to the formation of an ADCh cabinet.

Ibid. 27.4.1944.

(67) Ibid. 24.4.1944; 1.5.1944; 12.5.1944; 21.5.1944.

(68) Ibid. 2.8.1944.

(69) Ibid. 4.8.1944.

had much to do with the PR's decision to return to the cabinet in May 1945. With the PR's return to government and with the PCCh's gradual adoption of tougher policies and attitudes during the course of 1945, the PCCh lost its use as an ally for Ríos in his struggles with the PR.

Despite the differences between the PR and the PCCh over National Unity, relations between the two parties were not allowed to reach the point of open rupture. Wedded together by electoral self-interest, and to some extent by co-operation in the trade union field, neither party permitted their criticisms of each others' actions and policies to go too far. Indeed, even in late 1944 when divergences over National Unity were at their most stark, the CEN PR rarely criticised the PCCh and its most hostile practical act seems to have been its refusal to permit one Radical dignitary to publicly endorse XV Plenum resolutions.(70) Regional Radical organisations were rather less circumspect - the left-wing dominated Asamblea Radical of Santiago openly expressed its disapproval of XV Plenum resolutions while in the South, Radicals sabotaged the electoral campaign of Guillermo del Pedregal, a liberal technocrat especially selected by the PCCh to fight a congressional seat left vacant by the death of the Communist senator, Amador Paira, as a concrete manifestation of XV Plenum policies.(71)

(70) El Diario Ilustrado 10.10.1944.

(71) La Hora 24.9.1944 for the Asamblea Radical's strictures on XV Plenum resolutions. Southern Radicals failed to distribute cash they had received to finance del Pedregal's campaign - and to buy votes. FOR FO 371/37982 AS 4986/31/9, report from Santiago Chancery to the South American Department, London, dated 2.9.1944. It could be that the sabotage was not so much a rejection of National Unity as a gesture of support for del Pedregal's opponent, the old caudillo, Arturo Alessandri.

Not surprisingly, given the ancient rivalries and antagonisms between the PCCh and the PS, National Unity became an additional source of conflict between the two parties - particularly after the XV Plenum. Despite their profound differences, however, after the dissolution of the Comintern in June 1943, the PCCh proposed the creation of a single mass revolutionary party, the Partido Único, to the PS.(72) The issue of the Partido Único had its impact on the factional struggles inside the PS; the grovistas favoured the rapid creation of such a party while the anti-collaborationists, although accepting the idea in principle, counselled caution and a lengthy process of negotiation and agreement prior to its formation.(73) The PS did agree to the creation of joint co-ordinating committees with the PCCh at all levels in January 1944 but the growing strength of the PS's internal conflicts and continued differences over National Unity soon brought the Partido Único initiative to a halt - at least so far as the PS was concerned.(74) Nevertheless, the PCCh did absorb the Partido Socialista de Trabajadores (PST) in the name of the Partido Único in June 1944, while in 1946 it absorbed the rump of the PSA.(75)

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- (72) Carlos Contreras Labarca Unión Nacional y Partido Único, Report to the XIII Plenum (Santiago, 1943) pp28-30. The PCCh had made a similar initiative in 1937, see Chapter 4 of this work, pp189-190.
- (73) See Salvador Allende El PS proclama el 25 de octubre como fecha de reconquista (Santiago, 1943) p23 and La Nación 17.7.1944.
- (74) J.C. Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, p183.
- (75) El Siglo 5.6.1944; 19.6.1944; 5.6.1946. Although the PST had initially adopted an anti-communist stance, relations between the two parties became more cordial and in 1943, the PST purged its most vehement anti-communists. Ibid. 2.5.1943.

With the departure of the grovistas from the PS in July 1944 and the PCCh's renewed insistence on the desirability of collaboration with the Right at its XV Plenum, the PS began a vigorous campaign against National Unity. In late 1944, it counterposed the concept of Popular Unity - 'the union of those who have a community of aspirations, identity of aims, similarity of methods, spiritual brotherhood and solidarity of interest' - to that of National Unity.(76) Moreover, the PS took its battle against National Unity and the PCCh into the trade union movement in late 1944 and early 1945.(77) But the PS did not allow its opposition to National Unity to force it out of the ADCh until some months after the March 1945 congressional elections.(78) By that time, the shadows of the Cold War had begun to gather and the PS's anti-communism became increasingly marked and strident - leading the PS to abandon its declared independence of action and to serve in the vanguard of the Duhalde administration's offensive against the PCCh in the early months of 1946.

If National Unity proved useful to Ríos in his struggle with the PR and as an issue which kept the Left divided, it also served him well in the field of industrial relations. Shortly after Ríos took office, the PCCh expressed its commitment to the harmonious settlement of industrial disputes and to the avoidance of unnecessary disruptions at work - especially in industries vital to national defence.(79)

(76) La Opinión 21.10.1944.
(77) See, below, pp312-314.
(78) El Siglo 7.8.1945.
(79) Ibid. 14.4.1942.

However, the PCCh's ability and willingness to curb industrial unrest depended on a number of variables - amongst them, the state of labour relations in the industry or plant concerned, the internal politics of the unions involved, government performance in both the domestic and foreign arenas and inflationary pressures. Moreover, even when the PCCh was trying hard to maintain industrial peace, it rarely condemned strike actions. Rather, it concentrated its efforts on securing peaceful settlements before the strike had started, and, if this proved impossible, it supported the subsequent strike actions and cast the blame for them on the employers' intransigence or government inaction.

Although official statistics claim there were only 19 strikes in 1942, the PCCh does not appear to have exerted much energy on maintaining industrial peace until the latter part of 1942, when it had become clear that Ríos was moving towards rupturing relations with the Axis powers.(80) Thus, it supported two strikes in the nitrate industry in May and August 1942 - even though that industry was one 'vital to national defence'.(81) However, in late 1942, the PCCh praised coal miners for their patriotic self-sacrifice in accepting an unsatisfactory wage settlement and resisting pressures to strike and in January 1943, praised the copper workers of Sewell for similar reasons.(82) Indeed, by

(80) La Hora 10.1.1946.

(81) El Siglo 4.5.1942; 23.8.1942.

(82) Ibid. 16.11.1942; 30.1.1943. See also Angel Veas's article 'La Huelga de Sewell', Principios April 1942.

April 1943, Ríos, no friend of the PCCh, was moved to thank the party publicly for its 'loyal and disinterested co-operation' and in May he claimed that the workers as a whole had responded to his call for 'order, discipline and tranquillity at work'.(83)

However, in the latter part of 1943, industrial harmony was shattered by a wave of strike movements which pushed the total number of strikes for that year up to 127.(84) The increase of strike activity which, significantly enough, did not affect production in either the coal or the copper industries, was not caused by any dramatic reversal of the PCCh's labour policies. Rather inflation, the government's failure to respond constructively to PCCh and CTCh plans to increase production and its authoritarian handling of a number of labour disputes, created a groundswell of unrest which the PCCh felt little obligation to check.(85) As El Siglo put it in an article on the industrial unrest, 'when these problems cannot be solved by direct agreement, when the authorities of the Labour Department neglect their functions and allow conflicts to drag on indefinitely..... there is no other recourse than to strike'.(86) However,

(83) El Siglo 3.4.1943; 22.5.1943.

(84) La Hora 10.1.1946. Speech by Ríos. Although the bare statistics indicate a massive increase in strike activity in 1943, they are somewhat misleading. Many of the strikes in late 1943, for example, were caused by a single issue - decreto ley 506, which introduced shift work on the docks and, in effect, abolished overtime. El Siglo 7.10.1943.

(85) Government ministers rebuffed CTCh plans for increasing production by suggesting that the unions, if sincere, should first stop holding union meetings during working hours. El Siglo 11.10.1943. The government used its Emergency Powers to order the return to work of strikers in many industries in late 1943.

(86) Ibid. 31.10.1943; 1.11.1943. La Nación 12.11.1943. El Siglo 31.10.1943.

while the PCCh blamed the government for the upsurge of industrial unrest, it seems likely that there were other factors at work - apart from those already mentioned. In the first place, the municipal elections of April 1944 were approaching and the PCCh was usually less inclined to exert its influence to check labour unrest in the months leading up to such events. Secondly, the PCCh did not approve of Ríos's cabinet of administration which lasted from June to September 1943, and approved even less of Ríos's recognition of the military government in Argentina (identified by the PCCh as a fascist, pro-Axis regime).(87) Finally, it seems possible that in the months following the dissolution of the Comintern, when the PCCh was trying to persuade the PS to help form the Partido Único, the PCCh was attempting to demonstrate that its industrial policies were now determined by national rather than international factors. Whatever the precise nature of the PCCh's reasons, it continued to support industrial actions during early 1944, arguing that strikes did not affect production and that it was no part of National Unity to sacrifice the workers' rights and interests.(88)

Once the April 1944 elections had passed, industrial unrest declined and the PCCh began to pay more attention to rising prices, speculation and to the problem of increasing production. The XV Plenum of August 1944 had its impact on the PCCh's labour policies and the PCCh reiterated its commitment to increased production and to the harmonious settlement of labour disputes.(89) Once more, however, the PCCh

(87) Ibid. 7.6.1943.

(88) Ibid. 4.3.1944. Editorial 'No retroceder en las conquistas sociales'.

(89) Ibid. 7.9.1944.

stated that its desire to avoid strike actions did not mean that it had renounced the use of the strike weapon but only that it should be used in the final resort.(90) The PCCh's renewed determination to curb strike activity, and to keep labour conflicts within the Código del Trabajo, had concrete results. According to the PCCh, a strike in coal mines was avoided only because the miners were determined not to strike, while in the cement industry, where the PCCh was particularly strong, a strike action was postponed, not once, but several times on the PCCh's insistence.(91) Moreover, for the first time during the Ríos years, the PCCh began to condemn some strike actions as 'ill-prepared and premature' in late 1944.(92) But even while the PCCh was trying its hardest to curb industrial unrest, there were some instances when it encouraged strike action, most notably in a strike of Lota stevedores who had refused to load a ship from 'fascist' Argentina.(93) Nevertheless, partly at least because of Communist efforts, there were only 91 strikes in 1944 as compared to 127 in 1943, although it is also worth noting that during 1944 wage increases, in some important sectors, tended to be in excess of inflation rates.(94)

Even though, in other circumstances, the approach of congressional elections would have been heralded by a

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- (90) See the article by Juan Vargas Puebla in Principios, August-September 1944, entitled 'La Unidad Nacional es el arma de la victoria', p9.
- (91) Article by Reinaldo Núñez 'Entendimiento recíproco antes wue huelga', El Siglo 2.9.1944. See also ibid. 4.10.1944; 15.11.1944.
- (92) Ibid. 14.12.1944 - a strike of railworkers led by Socialists was so condemned.
- (93) FOR FO 371/38014 AS 629/2373/9, dispatch Orde to Eden, dated 8.11.1944.
- (94) La Hora 10.1.1946. Speech by Ríos for the strike statistics; see Appendix D for wage and inflation rates in the mining industry.

tougher industrial line on the part of the PCCh, it continued to press for the peaceful settlement of labour disputes in early 1945. But, with the end of the Second World War and the PCCh's gradual return to more aggressive policies, the PCCh became less inclined to check industrial unrest and it gave its support to the rising tide of strike actions which affected Chile in the final months of 1945.

The PCCh's support for Ríos was not intended to be an end in itself so much as a means by which National Unity goals could be realised. How successful was the PCCh in achieving those goals? As originally formulated, National Unity was intended to group together the widest possible combination of political forces around a series of objectives - the defence of democracy, the fulfilment of the obligations of continental solidarity and the maximisation of Chile's contribution to the Allied war effort.

With regard to the defence of democracy, there is little evidence to suggest that it was in any real danger during the Ríos years. The Right, as a whole, was in some disarray until it regained control over Congress in March 1943 and although it mounted a vigorous opposition to government after that date, it showed little inclination to force constitutional crises which could have resulted in Ríos's overthrow - despite Communist allegations to the contrary.(95) But rumours of military plots did circulate from time to time and in July 1944, according to one source, army conspirators abandoned an attempt to oust Ríos because of a general strike

(95) See, for example, El Siglo 21.7.1945.

threat made by the PCCh.(96) Rather than the Right or the Armed Forces, it might well be argued that Ríos himself was a greater danger to democracy - this feeling had some currency in 1943 and 1944 when he dispensed with the co-operation of the political parties and co-opted military men into his cabinet.(97) But, perhaps because he possessed wide special powers as a result of the war situation, Ríos showed no desire to overthrow democratic institutions, and governed, on the whole, within the law and with respect to democratic norms. On the occasions when Ríos did appear to be infringing democratic rights as, for example, when he used his Emergency Powers to circumvent the right to strike, the PCCh registered its protests and, in so far as democracy was threatened during the Ríos years, the PCCh can be considered to have discharged its self-imposed duty to defend it.

The PCCh's record of success in persuading Ríos to fulfil the obligations of continental solidarity is similarly unimpressive. Although the PCCh launched a vigorous campaign to persuade Ríos to break off relations with the Axis, it seems more likely that Ríos was influenced by Allied War successes and the probable consequences of US displeasure than by any domestic factors. Indeed, for all the PCCh's efforts, it failed to persuade either the PR or the newly formed ADCh to make unequivocal declarations of support for rupture while the PS, which had declared for that action in June 1942, arrived at its decision independently.(98)

(96) FOR FO 371/37982 AS 3943/31/9, telegram Orde to Eden, 24.7.1944.

(97) See, for example, Florencio Durán, op. cit., pp396-398.

(98) La Crítica 6.6.1942.

Whether or not domestic pressures and the PCCh's campaign were important factors in Ríos's decision to break off relations with the Axis, Chile was still one of the last Latin American countries to do so.(99) Furthermore, for all the PCCh's exhortations, Ríos was slow and unenthusiastic in fulfilling another obligation of continental solidarity, namely to take action against Axis agents and their activities and, despite the PCCh's persistent demands, Chile was one of the last Latin American countries to open diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.(100)

The PCCh met with greater success in its efforts to maximise Chile's contribution to the Allied war effort through its efforts to curb industrial unrest and increase production. Copper production, for example, increased steadily throughout the war years and between early 1942 and early 1945 there were no serious strike movements in that industry.(101) However, since copper workers were amongst the best paid in Chile and since their wages tended to keep abreast of inflation, PCCh policy probably only had a marginal impact. Perhaps a clearer example may be found in the coal industry

(99) Only Argentina maintained relations with the Axis for a longer period.

(100) See FOR FO 371/37981 A 1222/31/9, dispatch Orde to Eden, dated 9.2.1944 and ibid. FO 371/3784 AS 1919/56/9, Santiago Chancery to the Ministry of Economic Warfare, dated 29.3.1944 for descriptions by British Embassy officials of the way the government dragged its feet on this issue. Chile finally recognised the USSR in December 1944. El Siglo 11.12.1944.

(101) Juana Stambuk 'Movimientos sociales durante el Frente Popular' (Memoria, Universidad Técnica del Estado, Santiago, 1970) pp40-53. Copper production increased from 484 million kilos in 1942 to 490 million kilos in 1944. Estadística Chilena December 1949, p634.

which, although not directly connected to the Allied war effort, had great domestic importance and was an industry where labour relations were notoriously poor and where Communist unions were dominant. Once again coal production increased until 1945 and between January 1942 and January 1943 there was only one serious (but brief) strike.(102) Only in the nitrate industry where Communist unions were also dominant, was the PCCh noticeably less successful in maintaining industrial peace and strikes occurred every year of Ríos's presidency. However, the nitrate industry was not so strategically important as copper since the Allies had their own manufactured supplies; the disparity between inflation rates and wage increases tended to be wider than in either the coal or copper industries and, in some respects, labour relations were extremely poor.(103) Although the PCCh managed to create joint committees of workers and employers to increase production in both the coal and copper industries, these were resisted on the nitrate pampa where managers saw them as an attempt to undermine their authority and discipline at work.(104)

Finally, the PCCh failed to create a broad, mass National Unity movement which drew support from the Right as well as from the old frentista parties. National Unity

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- (102) See El Siglo 30.8.1944 for an account of this strike which affected 900 workers in Schwager. Coal production increased from 2,150,799 tons in 1942 to 2,279,438 tons in 1944. Estadística Chilena, December 1946, p743.
- (103) See Appendix D for a comparison of inflation and wage rates in the nitrate industry.
- (104) FOR FO 371/37981 AS 2031/31/9, dispatch from Orde to Eden, dated 25.3.1944.

was rejected by both the PR and the PS, and the PCCh's persistent advocacy of collaboration with the Right undermined the effectiveness and cohesion of the ADCh without producing any real response from right-wing sectors. Nevertheless, the PCCh did claim that individual members of right-wing parties were persuaded to co-operate with the ADCh in the 1944 municipal elections and that others participated in Production Committees and in an organisation formed to channel support for the Allied cause - the Unión para la Victoria(UPV).(105) Also the PCCh did manage to persuade one liberal technocrat, Guillermo del Pedregal, to stand as a National Unity candidate in a senatorial by-election.(106)

If the PCCh's record of success in achieving National Unity goals was mixed, its policy of support and co-operation with the Ríos regime brought some positive rewards. In the first place, the PCCh kept those advisory posts on the boards of semi-fiscal agencies which it had held under Aguirre Cerda.(107) Secondly, on the PCCh's request, Ríos intervened to secure the release of an Argentine Communist and Comintern activist, Victorio Codovilla, from jail in Argentina.(108) Thirdly, Ríos gave public recognition to CTCh, an organisation which was technically illegal under the Código

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- (105) Galo González La lucha por la formación del PCCh pp57-58. The UPV was founded in September 1942 and was basically the preserve of the ADCh parties. El Siglo 4.9.1942.
- (106) See above p297.
- (107) El Siglo 22.5.1943, speech by Ríos. Curiously enough, PCCh publications made no comment on its continued tenure of the advisory posts it received from Aguirre Cerda. But, in any event, there were only two. See Chapter 5, p259.
- (108) El Siglo 29.4.1944.

del Trabajo. (109) But these rewards were slight when measured against the benefits which naturally accrued to the PCCh by having an administration in power which, once more, was not hostile to it. Thus, except for the early months of 1946 when it was subject to some harassment by the Duhalde administration, the PCCh's freedom to operate was unimpeded. (110)

It was perhaps negative benefits rather than positive rewards which were the most striking products of National Unity. Despite the PCCh's support for a regime which was more conservative than its predecessor and despite its persistent efforts to curb industrial unrest, the PCCh did not suffer permanent or savage declines in its electoral and trade union support, nor does it appear to have experienced serious internal struggles.

Although, in nominal terms, the PCCh appears to have lost a great number of votes between the municipal elections of 1941 and 1944, possibly in the region of some 20,000, in terms of regidores and alcaldes elected the decline was slight. (111) In April 1941, the PCCh elected 122 regidores and 10 alcaldes while in April 1944, it elected 106 regidores and 18 alcaldes. (112) The PCCh itself

(109) Ibid. 2.5.1944. May Day speech by Ríos. However, Ríos refused to give the CTCh the personalidad jurídica it wanted until it relinquished its political ties. Nevertheless, later in 1944, it was announced that dues' payments to the CTCh were now legal. La Comuna (Puente Alto) 4.11.1944.

(110) See, Chapter 7, pp 340-341.

(111) No official statistics for PCCh votes in the April 1941 municipal elections exist. However, the PCCh polled 53,144 votes in the March 1941 congressional elections and 32,219 in the April 1944 municipal elections. Estadística Chilena, September 1941 and August 1944.

(112) Galo González, article in Principios, February 1944, p16; El Siglo 5.4.1944; 19.5.1944.

showed little concern over this decline and, indeed, claimed that the 1944 results were a victory for the PCCh, given the low turn-out and its own self-sacrifice in accepting poor positions on the electoral lists.(113) The PCCh was not so sanguine over the results of the March 1945 congressional elections - even though it polled 46,133 votes in March 1945, as compared with some 32,000 votes in April 1944 - apparently reversing a declining trend.(114) There were several good reasons for the PCCh's concern. First, in March 1945, the ADCh parties lost control of Congress. Secondly, in March 1945, the PCCh failed to equal its March 1941 record of 53,144 votes, even though in July 1944 it had absorbed the Partido Socialista de Trabajadores and, in theory at least, some 10,000 new votes - indicating that the PCCh had suffered a significant decline in its electoral support although, once again, the PCCh lost only one congressional seat in the process.(115) Thirdly, although the PCCh blamed the 'mean ambitions and absurd intransigence' of its allies and the adventurism and divisionism of the 'Trotskyists' in the PS for the Left's defeat in March 1945, it also admitted that the election result was a verdict on XV Plenum National Unity.(116) The PCCh criticised itself for failing to present National Unity as a combative movement for social and economic change and for

(113) Elias Lafertte, article in Principios, May 1944, pp8-10.

(114) Estadística Chilena December 1945, pp708-725.

(115) Ibid. The PCCh elected 15 deputies in 1945, compared with 16 in 1941. In the Senate, the PCCh elected 3 more members - bringing its total up to 5.

(116) Carlos Rosales, article in Principios, March-April 1945, pp10-15.

failing to make clear that its support for Alfaro was conditional.(117) Thus, the March 1945 election result was one of the factors which pushed the PCCh into more aggressive policies during 1945. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that between the congressional elections of 1941 and 1945, the PCCh's share of the total votes cast, fell by only 1.55% - less than either that of the PR or of the PS.(118)

National Unity does not appear to have had any drastic impact on the PCCh's standing and influence in the trade union movement. Although PCCh publications indicate that trade unionists had to be intermittently but forcefully reminded that legitimate demands for improved wages and conditions should be governed by political criteria and the need to contribute to the defeat of world fascism, there is little evidence to suggest that there was any large-scale revolt against the PCCh because of its labour policies and its efforts to curb industrial unrest. However, in 1944, a fairly serious challenge to the PCCh emerged in the copper-mining centres of Sewell and Chuquibambilla. Accusing the PCCh of the misuse of union funds, a mixed group - identified as ibañistas and ex-Communists by the PCCh - began to campaign to have the whole of the 6% of company profits, earmarked by the Código del Trabajo for equal division between the workers and their unions, distributed to the workers alone.(119) Helped, no doubt, by a general disgruntlement

(117) Ibid.

(118) Sergio Guiliastri Tagle Partidos Políticos Chilenos p319. The PR's share of the total vote fell by 1.73% and that of the Socialists (PS and PSA) by 3.93% over the same period.

(119) El Popular, Antofagasta, 27.2.1944; 2.3.1944; 4.3.1944.

with the PCCh's labour policies, the challengers did manage to break the PCCh's hold over one union in Chuquicamata - although they appear to have lost it again in 1945.(120)

The campaign to deprive the unions of their share of company profits - a far more important source of funds than members' dues payments - was given a national character by the right-wing parties and press and, indeed, the Cañas Flores bill was presented to Congress to that end.(121) After 1944, relations between the PCCh and the copper workers in Chuquicamata remained uneasy. They went on strike in April 1945 when the PCCh was doing its best to maintain industrial peace after the XV Plenum, while in October 1945 they struck again and, according to the PR, resisted the efforts of the PCCh and others to persuade them to return to work.(122) Significantly enough, however, on both these occasions the PCCh gave public support to the striking copper workers, suggesting that, whatever the exigencies of the PCCh's current political line, it was not prepared to risk an open confrontation with such an important body of workers.(123)

Perhaps the most serious challenge which the PCCh had to face in the trade union field came from its old rivals - the Socialists. Although there appear to have been persistent frictions between Socialist and Communist trade unionists at both the local and national level throughout the war years, hostilities between them became particularly

(120) Ibid. 9.6.1944; 3.7.1945.

(121) El Siglo 23.7.1945; 12.9.1945.

(122) Cuenta de la actuación del PR a la XVI Convención Nacional Ordinaria: enero 1944-enero 1946, p48.

(123) El Siglo 12.4.1945; 16.10.1945.

marked after the XV Plenum.(124) In December 1944, Socialists in the Railworkers' Union succeeded in calling strike action against the opposition of the PCCh and, indeed, the PS claimed to have defeated PCCh moves to gain endorsement for the XV Plenum National Unity at a series of national and provincial trade union conferences in late 1944 and early 1945.(125) However, the PCCh's failure to persuade a number of trade union conferences to express support for XV Plenum National Unity did not mean that the PCCh had lost all influence in the unions concerned; for example, even after the Unión de Profesores de Chile had rejected a motion in favour of National Unity, Communists were elected to posts of responsibility inside the union's national organisation.(126) Moreover, in the latter part of 1945, the PCCh's more aggressive stance enabled it to repair most of the damage which XV Plenum collaborationism had caused. Thus, when the CTCh split in the early months of 1946 as a result of a dramatic upsurge of tensions between the PCCh and the PS, precipitated by the PS's incorporation into the Duhalde administration, the PCCh was able to claim that it had retained the loyalty of the vast majority of CTCh provincial organisations as

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- (124) Socialists and Communists quarrelled over whether CTCh should belong to the ADCh (El Siglo 13.1.1943). A particularly good example of continuing frictions at the local level can be found in the struggles of Socialists and Communists to control Paper Mill unions in Puente Alto. See La Comuna (PCCh) and La Defensa Obrera (PS) - both published in Puente Alto during the war years.
- (125) El Siglo 14.12.1944 and La Opinión 5.11.1944; 28.11.1944; 11.12.1944; 16.12.1944; 7.1.1945.
- (126) La Opinión 10.1.1945. 4 Communists including Hernán Ramírez Necochea were elected to posts of responsibility in the UPCh.

well as that of a number of the more important national trade union federations.(127) And even though the PS used its control of the Ministry of Labour to unleash a ferocious campaign against Communist-dominated unions in the months which followed, it appears to have made few lasting gains at the expense of the PCCh - if only because the PCCh itself entered government in November 1946 and was able to reverse the trend.(128)

National Unity, then, does not appear to have done much serious or lasting damage to the PCCh's standing and influence in either the electoral or the trade union fields. Why should this have been the case? In the first place, the PCCh's over-all support for Ríos did not prevent it from criticising certain actions and policies - with the result that the PCCh successfully avoided identification with the regime's errors and shortcomings. Similarly, the PCCh, although generally in favour of the peaceful settlement of labour disputes, rarely attempted to prevent strikes if lengthy negotiations failed. Indeed, the PCCh concentrated on maintaining industrial peace in vital industries, like copper and coal mining, and only then exerted its influence to the maximum for relatively brief periods - as, for example, in the months immediately following the XV Plenum. Secondly, for all the antagonisms between the PS and the PCCh and despite their differences over the question of co-operation with the Right and the degree of support which should be extended towards the Ríos regime, they pursued

(127) El Siglo 3.3.1946.

(128) See Chapter 7, for a description of the PCCh's fortunes during 1946 and 1947.

similar industrial policies during much of the war years. The PS, no less than the PCCh, was broadly in favour of the peaceful settlement of labour disputes, particularly in vital industries. Moreover, during the Ríos administration, the PS was visibly disintegrating and offered no real alternative to the PCCh - although a few Communists, including at least one of high rank, did find their way into the PS.(129) Finally, in part at least, the PCCh's comparatively successful weathering of the war years can be explained in terms of the continuous process of organisational improvement which was carried out on the directions of the CC.

The efforts of the PCCh's leadership to create a disciplined and cohesive party during the war years had several important facets. In the first place, in the early months of 1942, the process of examination and purge of PCCh officers in the national, regional and local organisations, begun in earnest in October 1940, was extended to the rank and file.(130) All party cards were re-called and the now-purged regional and local committees were instructed to re-issue cards only to those members worthy of the honour of being Communists. Amongst the criteria to be used in deciding a member's worthiness were his performance as a member of a cell, his ability to obey instructions and yet show initiative, his dues' payment record, his honesty and personal morality and his general conduct as a defender of

(129) The high-ranking Communist was Isidro Godoy, member of the CC 1939-1941, breadworkers' leader and an old anarchist. He joined the PS in November 1944 (La Opinión 26.11.1944) possibly because of the PCCh's labour policies.

(130) Galo González, article entitled 'El carnet de partido y su significado', El Siglo 8.3.1942; 9.3.1942.

working class interests.(131) However, the PCCh leadership made it clear that these criteria should be used sensibly and that only 'conscious enemies' of the party - those who indulged in factional activities or who led corrupt personal lives - should be excluded. Indeed, much emphasis was placed on the need to educate and train those who did not measure up to all the criteria but who were 'unconscious' rather than 'conscious' enemies of the party.(132) The leadership also warned that the process of examination and purge of the membership should not proceed in a mechanical fashion and that, above all, it should not be used to settle personal scores.(133)

Despite these instructions, however, it is evident that the re-call and re-issue of party cards did cause some difficulties. According to Humberto Abarca, the Comité Local(CL) of Chuquicamata simply excluded all who were not 'old and tried' members while the CL Chañaral incurred displeasure by declaring itself dissolved - a procedure reminiscent of the POS and the PR rather than of a bolshevik party.(134) Moreover, the process took some time and in May 1942, Galo González complained that some 50% of the membership were technically outside the party since they did not have new party cards.(135) It seems unlikely that the PCCh lost anything like 50% of its members but the process of examination and purge was undoubtedly used to get rid of troublemakers and unreliable elements - and served to impress

- (131) Ibid.
(132) Ibid.
(133) Ibid.
(134) Ibid. 28.4.1942.
(135) Ibid. 3.5.1942.

upon the survivors that membership of the PCCh depended on their own good conduct. Nevertheless, in some respect there were few indications of an immediate improvement in performance since, for example, in September 1942 it was reported that on average, only half of the holders of new party cards regularly paid dues.(136)

Another instrument which the CC used to tone up and strengthen the functioning of the PCCh was the Plan Nacional de Emulación. Launched in September 1943, the Plan set out objectives covering every aspect of the PCCh's work and arranged competitions between organisations of equal rank at all levels.(137) Thus, for example, the CRS of Valparaíso and Santiago competed to increase the sales of El Siglo and Principios (the PCCh's theoretical magazine), to increase recruitment, to create local ADCh committees, to set up co-ordinating committees with the PS (as a preliminary to the creation of the Partido Único), to organise Production Committees, to train cadres and to organise study circles.(138) According to Humberto Abarca, the results of the first three months of the Plan were encouraging - some 105 local ADCh committees and 155 PS-PCCh co-ordinating committees had been created while over 4,000 new members had been recruited.(139) At the end of the Plan in April 1944, the PCCh expressed itself generally satisfied with the results, although criticism was made of its mechanical application.(140)

(136) Ibid. 28.9.1942.

(137) Ibid. 24.9.1943.

(138) Ibid. 7.10.1943.

(139) Article by Humberto Abarca in Principios, February 1944, 'El plan para movilizar a todos los Anti-fascistas' p11.

(140) Article by Galo González, in El Siglo 29.3.1944.

Another facet of the CC's efforts to strengthen the party's organisation was its concern with the problem of finding and training new cadres. After 1941, cadre schools began to function in Santiago and certain regional centres - the Escuela Central de Cuadros in Santiago offering residential courses of several months duration to groups of a dozen or so selected trainees.(141) Although the functioning of these schools was sometimes criticised, the PCCh claimed that by the end of 1945 it had solved the problem of how to discover new cadres and that it had finally reached the target of 5,000 cadres set by the XII Party Congress in December 1941.(142)

Hand in hand with the selection and training of new cadres, went a fairly systematic policy of promotion. Graduates of the cadre schools were seconded to posts of responsibility in the regional organisations, sometimes on a paid, full-time basis. Where regional officers had to find other jobs to support themselves and their families, the CRs were exhorted to make good any financial losses which they might incur through absence from work on party business.(143) Thus, during the war years, something like a trained, professional body of party organisers was beginning to emerge.

Although not all the graduates of the cadre schools proved to be a success in the posts they were given, the existence of a body of trained semi-professional cadres

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- (141) Principios, March 1944 'Experiencias de la Escuela Central de Cuadros por el Comité de Alumnos' pp22-23.
(142) G. González, La Lucha por la formación del PCCh, p57.
(143) Ibid. p63.

helped to slow down the high rate of turnover in the membership of the CRs which had been evident in the early 1940s. Two out of three cadres especially promoted to the CR in Santiago in 1943 were still members in 1945 while in the CR Coquimbo all three of the cadres so promoted were still in office in 1945.(144) Nevertheless, the rate of turnover in CR members remained fairly high - in Santiago, only four out of the sixteen CR members elected in 1944 were re-elected in 1945, in Antofagasta, six out of sixteen members were re-elected, in Concepción, five out of thirteen, while in Iquique, five CR members elected in 1943 survived to form part of a twenty-two man committee in 1945.(145) However, it is interesting to note that of the CR members elected for these regions in 1945 only one had served on the CR Santiago just before or just after the 1940 purge, only one in Antofagasta and none at all in Concepción and Iquique.(146)

So far as the CC was concerned, the rate of turnover in the membership of the important CRs probably obeyed two considerations - firstly, a desire to find the best person for the tasks at hand and secondly, a desire to retain a firm

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- (144) News of the promotions was given in an article by Luis Reinoso in Principios, February 1944, pp21-22. For the composition of these CRs in 1945 see El Siglo 19.11.1945 and El Siglo de Coquimbo 10.9.1945.
- (145) El Siglo 19.2.1944; 23.2.1944; 19.11.1945; 16.11.1945. El Sur (Concepción) 14.10.1945. El Despertar (Iquique) 19.12.1943; 16.10.1945.
- (146) Pedro Hernández in Santiago and Alberto Carrasco in Antofagasta shared this distinction. Frente Popular 11.12.1939; El Siglo 19.11.1945; 15.11.1940; 6.11.1945. Carrasco probably owed his survival to the fact that he headed the CR Antofagasta Control Commission - possibly Hernández owed his to the same reason.

control over the regional parties. Certainly, the brief tenure of most Regional Secretaries suggests that the CR was anxious to prevent those important officers from building up a local power base. Similar preoccupations probably played a part in the CC's decision not to permit three PCCh congressmen to stand for re-election in March 1945, returning them instead to work in the regional organisations.(147)

Another indication of general improvement might be deduced from the changes in the PCCh's organisational preoccupations. Just before Ríos came to office, the PCCh had been most concerned with the functioning of the cell, the lack of collective work on the CC and the CRs, with the resistance of PCCh trade unionists to the party's political line and with 'revolutionary vigilance' against corrupt and dissident elements.(148) While preoccupation with these problems by no means disappeared, the PCCh showed more concern, in the first instance, with its cadre policy and later, with 'bureaucratic formalism'. Bureaucratic formalism - which in essence seems to have been a new name for the old complaint of 'bureaucratism' - was manifested in the mechanical and unproductive obedience of orders from above and it was, in part at least, the product of the very success or, as the CC had it, of the excesses of 'revolutionary vigilance'. According to Galo González, some CHs had mistakenly expelled members who committed errors or who showed signs of dissidence instead of helping them by education and persuasion to

(147) Article by Galo González, in Principios, August 1945, 'Nuestra política de cuadros', p5.

(148) See, for example, articles by Humberto Abarca and Galo González in Principios, January 1942.

correct those deficiencies.(149) Indeed, bureaucratic formalism and the lack of theoretical education, according to the CC, had been responsible for the PCCh falling into XV Plenum errors.(150) The picture of a party in which 'revolutionary vigilance' had gone too far was further substantiated by complaints that some regional Control Commissions had become the directive organs and also by an incident recounted by Galo González, head of the National Control Commission. According to González when, in response to developments in the CPUSA, the CC of the PCCh was discussing the possibility of changing the name of the Chilean Communist Party, he did not express the opposition he felt because he was afraid of being accused of sectarianism.(151)

Although a few CC members were reprimanded and even demoted for their mistakes, PCCh publications suggest that there was a general improvement in the functioning of the CC during the war years.(152) At least, there were no overt signs of profound divergences on the CC and even the old frictions between trade unionists and the CC's political line appear to have diminished.(153) Nevertheless, at the

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- (149) Article by Galo González, Principios, Aug. 1945, p5.
 (150) Galo González, op. cit., p64
 (151) Ibid.
 (152) During the war years, CC members Higinio Godoy, Abel Torres and Juan Chacón Corona were reprimanded for offences ranging from 'routine and personalistic methods of work' and a lack of a sense of responsibility. See articles by Luis Reinoso and Humberto Abarca in Principios, Feb. 1944. Chacón, who had been involved in an escapade in which an ibañista presidential campaign meeting was sabotaged in late 1941 was demoted from the CC's Political Commission for several months. José Miguel Varas, Chacón, p117.
 (153) Between 1942 and 1945, Party publications do not reveal resistance amongst trade unionists of the kind indicated in November 1941. See, also, Chap. 5, p272.

PCCh's XIII National Congress in Santiago in December 1945, the Secretary General, Carlos Contreras Labarca, was severely criticised and apparently lost all effective power - although he did not lose office until he was kicked upstairs to be a minister in González Videla's first cabinet. (154) The immediate sequence of events which produced Contreras Labarca's downfall began in June 1945 when, as a member of the Chilean delegation to the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, he failed to publicly dissociate himself - and the PCCh - from a number of that delegation's actions (including support for the entrance of 'fascist' Argentina to the Conference). (155) On his return from San Francisco, Contreras Labarca was reprimanded by the CC and ordered to make a public self-criticism. Contreras Labarca initially refused to do so, at least in the way demanded by the CC, and only after long and heated discussions at the XIII Congress was he prevailed upon to comply. (156)

There seem to have been several elements in Contreras Labarca's downfall. The most obvious was that, just as Marcos Chamudes was 'liquidated' in 1940 in expiation for the PCCh's errors in the conduct of the Popular Front strategy, Contreras Labarca was selected to pay for the 'errors' of XV Plenum collaborationism which, unfortunately for him,

(154) Galo González, op. cit., pp64-66.

(155) El Siglo 20.8.1945. The Chilean delegation had also offended the PCCh by opposing the admission of the Provisional Polish Government to the UN by its opposition to veto powers.

(156) According to Luis Corvalán in Ricardo Fonseca - Combatiente Ejemplar, pl63, Contreras Labarca readily accepted instructions to make a self-criticism. But Galo González (op. cit., p65) records that he initially resisted making a self-criticism in the way he was told to do so.

had become the subject of the PCCh's pressing concern at precisely the time that he was absent from Chile attending the UN Conference in San Francisco. Some of the reasons why Contreras Labarca and not some other CC member was selected as the sacrificial victim seem clear enough. Contreras Labarca, like Earl Browder in the CPUSA, was the most prominent PCCh leader publicly associated with the 'excesses' of war-time class collaborationism, and to subject him to party discipline brought the PCCh into line with international communist experience. Moreover, since the CC had recently incorporated three ex-PST leaders into its number, it may have been eager to demonstrate to them - and to the PCCh as a whole - that even its highest officer was not above party discipline.(157) But, perhaps the fundamental reason for Contreras Labarca's fall was that he had finally lost the support of the majority of the ruling group on the CC - a group which comprised some 14 CC members by 1945.(158)

So far as can be ascertained from the available evidence, Contreras Labarca had remained in office since the early 1930s largely on the sufferance of a small group of rigorously proletarian CC members led by Galo González.(159) Although Contreras Labarca apparently strengthened his personal position in the late 1930s with the success of the Popular Front strategy, Galo González's power and prestige

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- (157) The three PST members incorporated onto the CC PCCh were Carlos Godoy Urrutia, Natalio Borman and Carlos Rosales.
(158) See Appendix E.
(159) See, Marta Vergara Memorias de una mujer irreverente, pl29.

also increased through the creation of a national system of Control Commissions in 1938 - a system of which he was the head.(160) The firm criticism of Contreras Labarca at the IX Plenum in October 1940 showed that he was not beyond the reach of González and his allies - as did the demotion of Contreras Labarca's closest associate from the CC in December 1941.(161) Even so, González's own position was far from being totally secure - as his admission that he was afraid to make known his objections to the idea of changing the PCCh's name indicates.(162) Nevertheless, with Duclos' denunciation of Browderism and the change in the policy of the International Communist Movement which that event signified, Galo González was in a position to engineer the downfall of Contreras Labarca. Whether he did so for any reason other than Contreras Labarca's collaborationism and indiscipline is, in the final analysis, difficult to decide. But, given that there was an underlying rivalry between González and Contreras Labarca - a rivalry which, nonetheless, did not prevent the two men from working together over many years - it seems likely that Contreras Labarca finally lost office not so much because of his 'errors' but simply because another candidate with the necessary qualities to fill the Secretary Generalship had emerged from amongst the younger members of the CC. After fourteen years as Secretary General, González and his allies probably felt that the time had come for Contreras Labarca to step down for another man, a man of impeccable proletarian origins,

(160) See Chapter 4, p209.

(161) See Chapter 5, pp267-270.

(162) Galo González, op. cit., p64.

of wide experience and of proven skill, the first of a generation of Communist leaders nurtured entirely within the PCCh - Ricardo Fonseca.(163)

If this analysis of the reasons for Contreras Labarca's downfall is correct, it at least has the merit of explaining one of the more puzzling aspects of the whole affair - why Contreras Labarca refused to make that self-criticism in the way the CC demanded. After all, Contreras Labarca had presided over and survived several sharp changes in the PCCh's policies with little apparent difficulty. It is hard to believe that the latest change in the policy of the International Communist Movement presented him with any real problem - unless, of course, it was the final straw in a lengthy process of disenchantment - and his continued membership of the CC and the PCCh after his 'demotion' at the XIII Congress seems to suggest that this was not the case. It might be argued that Contreras Labarca refused to make the the required self-criticism for reasons of personal dignity - but in the past he appears to have been able to accept fairly harsh criticism in good part. It is also possible that Contreras Labarca's initial resistance was based on an overconfident assessment of the strength of his support on the CC. However, on balance, it seems most likely that he refused to make the self-criticism precisely because he knew that his tenure of the Secretary Generalship was at stake - and, indeed, the fierce struggle which he put up may well have saved him from a less dignified exit than the one he

(163) See Appendix E, for a brief biography of Fonseca.

subsequently experienced.

Despite the improvements made in the PCCh's organization, it seems probable that party membership contracted during the war years. Although the PCCh had claimed some 50,000 members in 1940, by the end of 1941 it was reported that recruitment had 'weakened enormously' and that fluctuations were at their maximum.(164) This situation cannot have been improved by the re-call of party cards in the early months of 1942 and in August 1942, the PCCh announced a campaign to recruit 20,000 new members.(165) Although Galo González claimed some successes for this campaign, due, according to him, to the PCCh's correct political line, it was not until April 1943 that the CR Santiago announced that it had reached its target of 2,000 new members - some four months after the campaign had been originally supposed to finish.(166) Recruitment picked up again under the Plan Nacional de Emulación in late 1943 and early 1944 and, in the later part of that year, it seems probable that the PCCh absorbed some new members from the PST.(167) But, after early 1944, no significant increases were reported in the PCCh newspapers until late 1945, when, it was claimed, some 7,500 new members had joined the party in recent months.(168)

Several points of interest emerge from the PCCh's recruiting activities during the war years. Firstly, the PCCh appears to have made its most impressive gains in the

(164) El Siglo 31.12.1941.

(165) Ibid. 9.8.1942.

(166) Ibid. 1.4.1943.

(167) Between October 1943 and March 1944, the PCCh claimed 5,000 new recruits. Ibid. 27.3.1944.

(168) Ibid. 11.12.1945.

periods in which it adopted relatively tough industrial and political positions as, for example, in late 1943 and late 1945. Second, although fluctuations sometimes reached very high levels - at one point, Galo González reported that new members entered by one door and left by another - it was not a problem which loomed very large in the PCCh's pre-occupations.(169) This lack of concern probably reflected the fact that the leadership was more or less content with the size of the party, despite its fluctuations, or it may have realised that the problems could only be corrected, in the long run, by an overall and general improvement in the functioning of the party organisation. Thirdly, National Unity and particularly its XV Plenum variation, stimulated the PCCh to fresh efforts to recruit from all social classes. Indeed, the PCCh was careful to demonstrate that its candidates for the March 1945 elections came from the most diverse social groups.(170) and in the XVI Plenum in July 1945, a number of prestigious intellectuals of national prominence - including Pablo Neruda, Juvencio Valle (poets), Nicomedes Guzmán (novelist) and Alejandro Lipschutz (sociologist) - were formally inducted into the party.(171) Moreover, in the industrial unrest of late 1945, the PCCh began to make some important gains amongst white collar workers.(172)

Given the scantiness of the available evidence, it

(169) Ibid. 29.3.1944.

(170) The PCCh claimed that its candidates for the 1945 elections included 19 workers, 8 professionals and intellectuals, 1 industrialist, 2 white collar workers and a tailor. Principios, February 1945, pp10-11.

(171) El Siglo 9.7.1945.

(172) Ibid. 11.12.1945.

is impossible to gauge the size of the PCCh during the war years with much confidence. If previous estimates of between 25,000-30,000 members in 1940 bear any relation to the truth, it seems possible that after a sharp fall in 1941, membership began to recover in subsequent years and, although there were probably some set-backs, by the end of 1945, it was probably approaching the 25,000 mark once more.

Ironically enough, the dissolution of the Comintern in June 1943 only served to highlight the PCCh's dependence on developments in the International Communist Movement and, in particular, on developments in the CPUSA. PCCh policy clearly followed the general direction indicated by Earl Browder until his downfall in 1945, even to the extent of discussing the idea of changing the PCCh's name - an idea which made some sense in the United States' context, but little at all in Chile where the PCCh was a major working-class party with deep historic roots. Moreover, prior to the announcement of the dissolution of the Comintern, Contreras Labarca spent several weeks in the USA presumably being briefed on that topic, while before the XV Plenum, Elías Lafertte spent two months in the USA and Mexico.(173) While there is no record that US Communists visited Chile on co-ordinating missions, ex-Comintern dirigente Victorio Codovilla paid regular visits to the country during the war years - not always of his own volition - and probably continued to play the advisory and co-ordinating role he had

(173) Ibid. 31.5.1943; 1.7.1944.

played when the Comintern was still in existence.(174)

The PCCh also drew inspiration and guidance from developments involving the European Communist Parties. Thus, as Europe was liberated from Axis rule and Communists began to enter governments of National Unity, the PCCh began to press Ríos for cabinet office.(175) Similarly, as the newly-liberated territories held Constituent Assemblies to produce new Constitutions, the PCCh began to call for a Constituent Assembly to decide the future political, social and economic organisation of Chile.(176) It can be seen that the dissolution of the Comintern by no means altered the PCCh's rigorous adherence to the policies of the International Movement; indeed, it would have been rather surprising if the PCCh had suddenly begun to show an independent spirit. After all, the PCCh's prior adherence to Comintern directions had rested, in the final analysis, on the PCCh's willingness to be led and on the Comintern's power to persuade and induce. With or without the Comintern, the leaders of the International Communist Movement could use the same methods

(174) Codovilla was exiled to Chile in early 1944.
Ibid. 3.5.1944.

(175) In May 1943, the British press attaché reported to the Ambassador in Santiago that the PCCh had no wish to enter the Ríos administration because it thought the government 'weak and dilatory' - and because it was making gains at the expense of the PS. FOR FO 371/33754 A 5365/324/9, dispatch from Orde to Eden, dated 15.5.1943. A year later, the PCCh declared that its exclusion from government was no longer justifiable - but that it would not insist on cabinet participation if this was an obstacle to the formation of an ADCh cabinet. El Siglo 5.5.1944. By the end of 1945, the PCCh was vigorously demanding cabinet office. El Siglo 27.12.1945.

(176) The PCCh began to call for a Constituent Assembly after the XVI Plenum in July 1945. See, for example, El Siglo 6.9.1945.

to win the obedience of the PCCh.

However, although National Unity in all its various forms was directly inspired by the International Communist Movement, that concept and the policies which flowed from it did bring the PCCh what might best be described as a period of quiet success. While the PS, and to a lesser extent the PR, tore themselves apart with factional struggles, the PCCh strengthened its organisation and began to acquire the substance as well as the form of the monolithic party of the Bolshevik ideal. While the PR and the PS became hostile to Ríos and his administration, the PCCh, without straining the allegiance of its supporters too far, set about proving its worth as an ally for government, and in doing so, re-enforced its acceptability and respectability as a regular participant in the game of Chilean politics.

**Chapter 7 The Cold War and President Gabriel González
Videla, 1946-1947.**

Although Cold War pressures began to have some effect on Chilean politics in the latter part of 1945, it was not until early 1947 that they came to have a decisive impact. During 1946 the Radical-Communist alliance remained basically intact and the PCCh helped to make Gabriel González Videla Chile's third successive Radical President and, together with the PR and the PL, formed part of his first cabinet which took office in November 1946. However, by April 1947, Cold War pressures had intensified considerably and the PCCh was forced from cabinet and into an increasing isolation from its allies both inside and outside the government. By August 1947, it had become abundantly clear that González Videla was only waiting for the appropriate opportunity before launching a national offensive against the PCCh - an opportunity which came in October when coal miners on legal strike resisted (with the encouragement and support of the PCCh) a government command to return to work. Accusing the PCCh of plotting his overthrow with the help of foreign agents, González Videla ordered the arrest of Communist activists and leaders throughout the country and although the party was permitted a severely limited legal existence in the months following the October strike, it was subjected to fairly persistent harassment and persecution by the authorities. In

September 1948, with the promulgation of the Ley de Defensa de la Democracia, the PCCh was outlawed and its members retreated into complete clandestinity.

Despite this, the period immediately following the end of the Second World War was, in many ways, one of great success for the PCCh. Under President González Videla, the PCCh occupied cabinet and high government office for the first time in its history and it experienced a dramatic increase in membership, in electoral support and in its trade union influence. Indeed, to no small degree the PCCh's very success proved to be its undoing since it alarmed the Right and gave its old Radical allies grounds for disquiet. These developments, together with the increasingly bitter rivalries between Russia and the USA and with Chile's pressing need for US economic aid, gave González Videla both motive and opportunity to take decisive steps to curb the PCCh's growing power. Although the PCCh continued to suffer from organisational problems during 1946 and 1947, there is no evidence to suggest that the party was troubled by any serious internal conflicts during those years. Thus, in 1947, in contrast to 1927, the PCCh was able to retreat into clandestinity in relatively good order, with its organisations weakened by arrests but not by defections or factional strife of any significance and, most important of all, with its morale high.

The economic background to the political developments of 1946 and 1947 was a sombre one. Production in the copper and coal mining industries declined and in 1946, tax revenue

from copper exports fell by some 335 million pesos.(1) Moreover, by 1947, the nitrate industry which had experienced something of a revival in the immediate post-war period was also in difficulties.(2) While Chile's economy was in the grips of the post-war recession, the price of imported goods continued to rise as did government spending and the inflation rates began to experience some sharp increases rising from 8.8% in 1945 to 33.5% in 1947.(3) Since wages, in general, did not keep up with inflation and since the supply of essential food-stuffs like bread and cooking oil became uncertain, considerable social and industrial unrest was generated.(4)

Perhaps the first effects which the Cold War had on Chilean politics was to help push the PCCh towards a tougher political line in the latter part of 1945 and to exacerbate old rivalries and antagonisms between the PCCh and the PS. However, when the PCCh initiated its formal retreat from the 'excesses' of war-time class collaborationist policies at its XVI Plenum in July 1945, it was clearly responding to a mixture of domestic and international developments. Thus, while the publication of Jacques Duclos' letter criticising the errors of Browderism in June 1945 clearly had a bearing on the PCCh's shift of direction - as did the government's comportment

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- (1) Coal production fell from 2,078,530 tons in 1945 to 1,954,063 tons in 1946; copper production fell from 470,181,413 kilos to 361,038,161 kilos. Estadística Chilena, December of 1946 and 1949. See, Departamento de Estudios Financieros, Cuentas Fiscales de Chile (Santiago, 1959) p36 for copper tax revenue figures.
- (2) Tax revenue from nitrate exports declined from 327.9 million pesos in 1946 to 149.9 million pesos in 1947. Ibid. p36
- (3) Aníbal Pinto Chile un caso de desarrollo frustrado p205
- (4) See Appendix D for a comparison of inflation rates and wage increases in one important sector, the mining industry.

at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco - other factors were also at work.(5) Even before Duclos' letter had been published, the PCCh itself had admitted that the disappointing results of the March 1945 congressional elections were, in part at least, the product of XV Plenum resolutions - or rather the PCCh's failure to emphasise their reform content.(6) Perhaps more important still, with the disappearance of the Axis threat, the PCCh no longer had a convincing argument with which to persuade the workers to curb their demands for better wages and conditions. Indeed, such was the intensity of social discontent in the months after the end of the Second World war (even normally quiescent white collar workers struck in Santiago) that the PCCh would have found it extremely difficult and costly, in political terms, to have attempted to curb industrial unrest.(7)

Despite these pressures, the PCCh made no sudden lurch to the left. At the XVI Plenum in July 1945, the PCCh did not abandon the concept of National Unity or its appeals to the progressive Right although it did make a more forceful commitment to fundamental economic and social reforms.(8) However, in the months following the XVI Plenum, the PCCh began to give consistent support to the workers' demands for better wages and conditions, became increasingly critical of government and in particular of its tactics of dealing with

(5) See above, Chapter 6, pp292, 322.

(6) Ibid. pp310-311.

(7) See, an article by Julio Alegría in Principios, October 1945 entitled 'La pequeña burguesía nacional se incorpora al movimiento social' for an account of the white collar workers' strike movements.

(8) See above, Chapter 6, p292.

disputes in important industries by imposing settlements and ordering strikers to return to work.(9)

The PCCh completed its formal process of re-orientation at its XIII National Congress in Santiago in December 1945. At that Congress, the PCCh called on Chile to resist being drawn into a regional block against the Soviet Union and called for a regrouping of democratic and progressive forces which would push Chile through the bourgeois democratic revolution.(10) According to Contreras Labarca, this process would involve a profound agrarian reform and the break-up of the latifundia, massive industrial development to end Chile's dependence on the imperialist powers, nationalisation of the coal and electricity industries, improved standards of living for the masses and a new constitution.(11) The PCCh claimed that the best way to achieve these changes was for the party to enter cabinet, together with other ADCh parties, and to support the workers in their struggle for better wages and conditions.(12) The goals and policies adopted at the XIII National Congress were pursued more or less consistently during the next two years

The PS also began to move towards more aggressive and left-wing policies after the end of the Second World War - although the shift in direction was not so marked for the PS as it had been for the PCCh. A few weeks after the PCCh's XVI Plenum, the PS announced its Third Front policy of independence from the government and from the PCCh and in August, it

(9) See, for example, El Siglo 23.9.1945.
(10) Ibid. 9.12.1945.
(11) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.

left the ADCh and became increasingly critical of the PCCh.(13) Although the PS had good reason for its action, engaged as it was in a desperate struggle to restore its influence and strength after the factional conflicts of 1943-44, it, too, was also influenced by international considerations, as the Socialist historian, J.C. Jobet, has indicated.(14) Unable and unwilling to check the rising tide of industrial unrest which affected Chile in the post-war months, the PS sought to take advantage of the growing frictions between the USA and Russia in order to gain an edge over the PCCh. Thus, in the months after August, the PS attacked the PCCh, Russia and communist parties in general and defended the USA from communist charges that it was seeking world domination.(15) By January 1946, the PS was accusing the PCCh of converting Chile into a battleground between the Great Powers and declaring publicly that the USA would soon be fighting communism as it had fought nazism.(16) Moreover, the PS warned the PR (then holding a National Convention in Valdivia) that unless it adopted a belligerent attitude towards the PCCh, Pan American ideals would be endangered and it could not expect help or support from the PS.(17)

The PCCh's deteriorating relations with the government and the PS helped to produce a serious political crisis in late January 1946. Determined to crush a strike on the

(13) La Opinión 30.7.1945; 7.8.1945; 30.8.1945.

(14) See, J.C. Jobet El Partido Socialista de Chile, I, p187.

(15) See, for example, La Opinión 20.10.1945; 22.10.1945; 31.10.1945; 10.11.1945; 19.11.1945.

(16) Agustín Alvarez Villablanca Objetivos del Socialismo en Chile (Santiago, 1946), p1; La Opinión 17.1.1946.

(17) La Opinión 17.1.1946.

nitrate fields - and, in general, to restore labour discipline in a turbulent industrial climate - Vice President Duhalde rescinded the personalidades jurídicas of two nitrate unions (in effect, dissolving them).(18) This action was denounced by the CTCh, the ADCh and the PS and in one of the protest demonstrations which followed in Plaza Bulnes, Santiago, the police opened fire, killing several participants.(19) The 'massacre' of Plaza Bulnes led Duhalde to impose a state of siege and to invite Armed Service chiefs into his cabinet - actions which caused the PR, the FN and the PSA to resign from the cabinet and the CTCh to call a national general strike for January 30th.(20) The strike was generally successful and to secure a prompt return to work, Duhalde agreed 'in principle' to a number of demands presented to him by the CTCh - demands which included the lifting of the state of siege, the formation of a civilian left-wing cabinet, the restoration of the personalidades jurídicas to the two nitrate unions and the punishment of those guilty of the Plaza Bulnes massacre.(21) Although the government lifted the state of siege on January 31st, on February 1st the CTCh, in an attempt to force the rapid implementation of its other demands, announced the re-imposition of the strike from February 4th.(22) At that point, the paths of the PS and the PCCh began to diverge sharply. On February 2nd, the PS

(18) El Siglo 13.1.1946.

(19) Ibid. 29.1.1946.

(20) Ibid. 1.2.1946.

(21) Ibid. 4.2.1946. Other demands included the rupture of diplomatic relations with Spain and Argentina, effective action against price rises and the withdrawal of the decree prohibiting peasant unionisation.

(22) Ibid. 2.2.1946.

accepted an invitation from Duhalde to join his cabinet, declared that the decision to re-impose the general strike had been forced upon the CTCh by the PCCh and instructed its supporters not to respond to the new strike call.(23) Not surprisingly, since the Socialist delegates to the Consejo Directivo Nacional(CDN) of the CTCh had originally approved the renewal of the strike - and, in any event, were bound by the decision of the majority - the PCCh accused the PS of betraying the working class movement for the tawdry rewards of cabinet office.(24) For its part, the PS declared that similar ambition for cabinet office had motivated the PCCh to press for the new strike, that the PS's presence in cabinet was sufficient guarantee that Duhalde would live up to his undertakings and that, in consequence, there was no need for a further general strike.(25)

Partly because of the PS's defection, the general strike which began on February 4th was not as effective as the previous one - although it was not the complete failure that the PS claimed.(26) On February 7th, after receiving a detailed reply to its demands from the government, the CTCh ordered a general return to work.(27) However, with the approval of the CTCh, some unions continued to strike to gain satisfaction for their particular demands, and it was not until February 21st that Vice President Duhalde was able to announce that industrial tranquility had been restored.(28)

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- (23) La Opinión 2.2.1946; 3.2.1946.
(24) El Siglo 3.2.1946.
(25) La Opinión 2.2.1946.
(26) Ibid. 5.2.1946.
(27) El Siglo 8.2.1946.
(28) Ibid. 22.2.1946.

The events of late January and early February 1946 split the CTCh into two warring factions, one Socialist and the other Communist, both laying claim to the name of CTCh. The Communist CTCh, led by Bernardo Araya, expelled the Socialist leader and Secretary General of the undivided CTCh, Bernardo Ibáñez, with the support (according to El Siglo) of the vast majority of CTCh provincial organisations and most of the national trade union federations.(29) Ibáñez replied by gaining official government recognition for his Socialist CTCh and by using the police to evict Communists from the CTCh headquarters in Santiago.(30) These were but the opening shots in a civil war in the trade union movement which lasted until June 1946 and which, at times, spilt over into physical violence as Communists and Socialists battled for control of individual unions.(31) The Socialist Minister of Labour used his powers to break the PCCh's hold over a series of trade unions and he re-activated persecutions for fraud against Communist trade union officials, prosecutions which had been left in abeyance while the PCCh and the government had been on relatively good terms during the war years.(32) The government, for its part, arrested Communist

(29) Ibid. 3.3.1946.

(30) Ibid. 19.2.1946.

(31) See, for example, La Hora 13.6.1946 for an account of one clash between Socialists and Communists in which two people were killed and three wounded.

(32) El Siglo 1.3.1946. Allegations and counter-allegations of fraud in the management of union funds had been common currency in the battle for trade union influence between the PS and PCCh for many years. However, in most, but not all, cases, this did not mean that the trade union officials charged with fraud committed that offence for personal profit. Usually, it meant that trade union funds had been used to benefit the parties to which the officials belonged. Under the Código del Trabajo, this was an offence and the account books of trade unions were regularly examined by the Dirección General del Trabajo, which kept a close watch on union expenditure. If a union overspent or mis-spent its funds, the officials were technically guilty of fraud.

trade union activists and harassed the PCCh press - indeed, by mid-April, some one hundred Communist activists were in jail, including the director of El Siglo. (33) But, by June 1946, official hostilities between the two parties had begun to decline, not only because the trade union elections which fed the conflict were over, but because President Ríos's days were clearly numbered. With his death in late June, the question of the forthcoming presidential elections pushed the struggles between the PS and the PCCh into second place - for the time being.

Cold War pressures clearly had an impact on the upsurge of antagonisms which engulfed the PS and the PCCh in early 1946 - although, given the ancient rivalries between the two parties, they provided the excuse rather than the cause. These same Cold War pressures also played their part in the deteriorating relations between the government and the PCCh and certainly both made use of Cold War analysis and language in early 1946. Duhalde accused the PCCh of obeying international slogans aimed at upsetting the national economy and undermining the democratic regime and claimed that the recent conduct of the PCCh had been 'openly revolutionary and subversive'. (34) For its part, the PCCh repeatedly alleged that there was an imperialist and reactionary offensive under way on both the national and international plane and accused US imperialism of plotting with the Oligarchy to install a dictatorship in Chile which would ensure that the country

(33) El Siglo 15.4.1946.
(34) Ibid. 21.2.1946.

remained in its underdeveloped state.(35) Indeed, in many ways the conflict between the PCCh and government in early 1946 closely paralleled the conflict which forced the PCCh into clandestinity the following year.(36) However, while Cold War pressures were sufficient to widen the breach between the PS and the coalition of left and centre parties with which it had been associated for the better part of ten years, they were not strong enough, as yet, to destroy the links which bound the PCCh and the PR together.

While the PR was no less aware of the deteriorating relations between Russia and the Western Powers and while it criticised the PCCh for its more aggressive labour policies in late 1945, the PR's actions during early 1946 were governed by other considerations. In particular, the withdrawal of President Ríos from public life signalled that new presidential elections were in the offing. The PR, still dominated by its left-wing, did not look favorably on Duhalde's appointment to the Vice Presidency, regarding it, with some justification, as an attempt by Ríos to ensure that the next President of the Republic would be a right-wing Radical. Moreover, when Duhalde, acting on Ríos's advice, rejected Radical demands to postpone the dissolution of the two nitrate unions and to form a left-wing cabinet, the PR's hostility towards him increased.(37) Thus, when the PR supported the January 30th strike and, unlike the PS, the February 4th strike as well (if only for forty-eight

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- (35) See, for example, articles by Humberto Abarca and Galo González in Principios, February-March 1946, April 1946 and El Siglo 24.1.1946; 4.4.1946; 8.5.1946.
- (36) The parallel apparently even extended to foreign pressures being placed on Ríos to outlaw the PCCh. Speech by Communist deputy José Díaz Iturrieta in homage to Ríos after his death. El Siglo 3.7.1946.
- (37) El Siglo 6.2.1946.

hours) it did so without any thought of taking sides in the Cold War.(38)

Similarly, intent as it was to construct a left-wing electoral coalition which would give the Radical presidential candidate victory, the PR was almost as angry with the PS for joining the Duhalde cabinet as was the PCCh. While the PR was prepared to concede that the PCCh's responsiveness to changing international conditions and its attempts to use strikes for political ends were reprehensible, it declared that the PS was only marginally less guilty of the same offences - and that, in the current circumstances, the PS's actions had been more blameworthy than those of the PCCh.(39)

If the left-wing dominated CEN refused to be panicked into an anti-communist stance by either Cold War or domestic pressures, differing attitudes towards the alliance with the PCCh did have an impact on internal Radical conflicts. In March 1946, right-wing Radicals formed the Movimiento Radical Democrático (and later, the Partido Radical Democrático) which pledged its support for the Duhalde government, attacked the CEN and the 'communist' presidential candidacy of the Radical left-winger González Videla.(40) After March 1946, relations between the CEN and Duhalde continued to deteriorate. In June, the CEN declared its formal opposition to his government and in July it took the unprecedented step of expelling Duhalde from the party for a variety of offences including giving encouragement to the Movimiento and allowing his name to go forward as

(38) La Hora 6.2.1946.

(39) El Siglo 2.3.1946. Report of a speech by the President of the CEN PR to the Asamblea Radical.

(40) La Hora 20.5.1946.

a presidential candidate when the PR had already officially selected González Videla.(41) Notwithstanding his expulsion, Duhalde formally announced his presidential candidacy in August in a speech in which he attacked the PCCh, called upon the nation to rise up against the 'accomplices of this international sect' - meaning the CEN of the PR - and accused González Videla of being a communist tool.(42)

While relations between Russia and the West continued to deteriorate during mid-1946, the Cold War was not a decisive issue in the presidential campaign of that year. Although Cold War pressures exacerbated the PR's internal difficulties and strengthened the Ps's resolve to oppose González Videla's candidacy, they did not prevent the PR, the PCCh and other ADCh parties from meeting to endorse that candidacy in July 1946.(43) More striking still, Cold War pressures were not strong enough to persuade the right-wing parties to set aside their differences and unite behind a single candidate to combat the 'communist' threat which González Videla appeared to represent and on September 4th 1946, González Videla defeated three rival candidates in the presidential elections.(44) However, he failed to win an absolute majority and a Congreso Pleno (a meeting of both Chambers) had to be called to ratify his victory at the polls.

Since the right-wing parties had a majority in

(41) Ibid. 23.6.1946; 27.7.1946.

(42) El Siglo 3.8.1946.

(43) Ibid. 22.7.1946.

(44) The other candidates were Ricardo Cruz Coke (Conservative, 142,441), Fernando Alessandri (Liberal, 131,023 votes) and Bernardo Ibáñez (Socialist, 12,144 votes). González Videla polled 192,207 votes. Urzúa Valenzuela Los partidos políticos chilenos p38.

Congress, rumours of plots and transactions designed to prevent González Videla from being confirmed in office abounded while the right-wing press made much of the 'red threat' in an attempt, according to some, to persuade the Armed Forces to step in and declare González Videla's election void.(45)

In the event, however, when the Congreso Pleno met on October 24th, González Videla, helped by his old mentor Arturo Alessandri (who had persuaded the PL to vote for him), was confirmed in office by 138 votes to 44.(46) Although González Videla owed his success in the Congreso Pleno to a number of factors, including Liberal antipathy towards his principal rival, the Conservative Ricardo Cruz Coke, and the fears aroused by the probable reaction of the PCCh and the masses if their candidate was not approved, he also won because he was able to allay the anxieties of all but the most die-hard of right-wingers. Precisely how he managed to satisfy those anxieties is not altogether clear but the assurances he gave to the British Ambassador in Santiago both before and after the Congreso Pleno were probably indicative of his general approach. González Videla privately informed the Ambassador that although it was necessary to invite the PCCh to share government office, he would dispense with its services

(45) The strongest rumour, according to the British Ambassador in Santiago, was that Liberals would vote for Cruz Coke, who would then resign, leaving Arturo Alessandri (the President of the Senate) in charge. Alessandri would call fresh elections and the Right would combine to defeat the Left-wing candidate. FOR FO 371/52003 AS 6413/16/9, Report from Leche to Bevin, dated 4.10.1946. Similar rumours were current in 1970 when President Allende had to be confirmed in office by a Congreso Pleno.

(46) La Hora 25.10.1946.

'as soon as humanly possible', waiting only for the time when the PCCh had discredited itself before the masses.(47)

Similar assurances were given to the US Ambassador and, according to Luis Corvalán, to the PL as well.(48)

While it might well be argued that such assurances were merely the necessary price of victory in the Congreso Pleno, later events suggest that González Videla followed his declared intentions fairly exactly. If González Videla intended to push the PCCh out of government at the first available opportunity, the tones of moral outrage which infused his accusations of betrayal against the PCCh in 1947 hardly seem justified. Conversely, however, the charges of betrayal which the PCCh, in its turn, levelled against González Videla also lack conviction. PCCh publications of the time leave no doubt that the party was fully aware of the strength of the national and international forces ranged against it. Moreover, the PCCh cannot even claim that it had any particular liking for or trust of González Videla. Although Pablo Neruda made a passionate contribution to his electoral campaign with the poem El pueblo lo llama Gabriel, the PCCh declared its support for his candidacy 'in spite of his vacillations' and because, as 'the representative of the small and medium bourgeoisie', he had defeated Duhalde, the representative of the Oligarchy, in the contest for the PR's presidential nomination.(49)

(47) FOR FO 371/52003 AS 6682/16/9, and A 7055/16/9, reports from Leche to Bevin, dated 21.10.1946 and 4.11.1946 respectively.

(48) F. Parkinson Latin America, the Cold War and the World Powers (London, 1974) p13; Luis Corvalán Ricardo Fonseca, Combatiente Ejemplar p179.

(49) Principios, July 1946, 'Suplemento, Resumen de la reunión del CC PCCh, 15-16 julio', p26.

Furthermore, at the Convention where González Videla was proclaimed the candidate of the ADCh parties, Ricardo Fonseca went to almost insulting lengths to wring a public commitment from him that he would stand by his election platform and govern with the help of those parties who elected him to the Presidency.(50) In other words, then, the PCCh supported González Videla for much the same reason as it had supported Aguirre Cerda and Ríos - because he was the best available candidate - and not because it entertained any illusions about his probity and dependability.

Any PCCh expectations that its stay in government was likely to be other than a short and stormy experience must have evaporated after González Videla announced his first cabinet. Although the PCCh had urged him to form an administration based on the ADCh parties and the Falange Nacional, he chose, instead, to invite the PL to share office with the PR and the PCCh, so forming the so-called 'tricolour' government.(51) Although González Videla, a leader of the left-wing Radical faction which had consistently condemned Ríos for his insistence on giving office to Liberals, found it necessary to emulate his predecessor in precisely that respect, he had little real choice in the matter. Quite apart from any deal he may have made with the PL to secure its support in the Congreso

(50) Luis Corvalán op. cit., pp175-176.

(51) Liberals held 3 ministries (Defence, Health and Justice); the PCCh also held 3 (Ways and Public Works, Agriculture and Lands and Colonization); 4 Radicals held the remaining ministries between them (Interior, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce and the Economy and Education). FOR FO 371/52003 A 7055/16/9, report from Loche to Bevin, dated 4.11.1946.

Pleno, González Videla had to construct a government which would reassure the right-wing parties and the Armed Forces, or at least prevent them adopting increasingly hysterical and intransigent positions. Moreover, he needed some right-wing support to secure a working majority in Congress and since the Partido Conservador had categorically refused to share office with the PCCh, the PL seemed the only practical alternative.

Two questions remain, however, why was the PCCh so determined to occupy cabinet office and why did González Videla find it necessary to honour his undeniable debt to the PCCh when the two previous Radical Presidents - who also owed their election, in some part at least, to Communist votes - managed to keep that party's support without conceding cabinet office?

The PCCh gave several reasons for wanting cabinet office. The main reason, according to Galo González at a PCCh National Conference held in Santiago in October 1946, was that the party attached over-riding importance to the implementation of González Videla's election programme, a programme which promised sweeping changes for Chile.(52) Since the PCCh had supported the two previous Radical Presidents from outside the cabinet and had been unable to ensure the implementation of their electoral platforms, the time had come for the PCCh to enter government and work for the fulfilment of González Videla's programme from within. Galo González also declared that for some time the PCCh had felt the need to pass from its

(52) El Siglo 17.11.1946. Report of Galo González's speech to the PCCh's October 1946 Conference.

'agitational' phase to one of organisation and creation and that, like their European counterparts, the PCCh wanted to play an active and creative role in the solution of the great problems which faced the Chilean people.(53) However, there were probably reasons other than those that Galo González mentioned. The PCCh may well have felt that after having helped Aguirre Cerda and Ríos without much direct reward, it was now entitled to its fair share of the spoils. Furthermore, given the continued deterioration of relations between Russia and the USA, the PCCh probably felt that it would be better placed to defend its interests - and those of the working class - inside rather than outside the government. Finally, although it is unlikely to have played a large part in the party's deliberations, cabinet office gave the PCCh the chance to settle some old scores with the PS and, perhaps more important, to strengthen its hold over the trade union movement.

There were also reasons why González Videla found it necessary to invite the PCCh to share cabinet office. In the first instance, in contrast to its attitude during the Aguirre Cerda administration and the earlier part of Ríos's presidency, the PCCh vociferously demanded office. Secondly, whatever misgivings the PCCh harboured towards González Videla, it had given him valuable support in both the 1942 and the 1946 presidential campaigns and his debt of gratitude to the party was rather greater than that of either Aguirre Cerda or Ríos, both of whom had become presidential candidates in spite of Communist opposition. Moreover, while Aguirre Cerda could do

(53) Ibid.

without Communist support because he could count on the backing of a powerful PS and while the Second World War assured Ríos of Communist support without having to pay for it, neither condition prevailed when González Videla came to office. Given Chile's severe economic difficulties and the disintegration of the PS and its displacement by the PCCh as Chile's foremost working class party, González Videla's need of Communist support and co-operation was greater than that of either of his predecessors. Finally, unlike Aguirre Cerda or Ríos, González Videla was a left-wing Radical who professed to see the need for reforms, who had announced that the old liberal economy was dead and who declared that he wanted to extend democracy from the political into the economic sphere.⁽⁵⁴⁾ In contrast to Ríos who had tried not to become overdependent on the Left, González Videla was anxious, in the early stages of his administration at any rate, not to become overdependent on the Right. For these reasons, he needed the PCCh's support and he made some attempt to keep that support even after the Communist ministers had been forced from the cabinet.

If González Videla hoped that the PCCh would prove a docile and tractable partner, tamely allowing itself to be discredited before the masses and then, quietly eased from the government, his hopes were ill-founded. Before accepting cabinet office, the PCCh made it perfectly clear that it would continue to pursue the aggressive policies it had adopted at the XIII National Congress and that it would not allow itself to be dragged down the path of compromise and vacillation

(54) See, González Videla's speech to the PR National Convention in January 1946. Ibid. 28.1.1946.

which had all but destroyed the PS.(55) At the PCCh's National Conference in October 1946, Galo González warned that the President's programme would only be implemented with the support and mobilisation of the masses and indicated that the Communist ministers were not to consider themselves bound by cabinet decisions with which they disagreed; instead, they were to report back to the CC which would, if necessary, take the matter to the people.(56) Moreover, Galo González also declared that strikes were not the responsibility of the workers but were caused by the intransigence of the employers.(57) Galo González off-set these rather aggressive declarations by indicating that the PCCh would continue to seek to persuade other groups, including the progressive right, of the need to implement González Videla's election programme and that the party was prepared to be accommodating within limits but he made it clear that the PCCh was not prepared to sacrifice the substance of the programme.(58) Indeed, given the lengthening shadows of the Cold War and its own experiences of past Radical regimes, the PCCh viewed its entrance into government not as the triumphant conclusion of decades of effort but as the beginning of a new phase of struggle, a phase in which the PCCh was determined to mobilise all its forces to ensure that González Videla redeemed his election pledges and that Chile was pushed further down the road to the bourgeois democratic revolution.

(55) Ibid. 17.11.1946.

(56) Ibid.

(57) Ibid.

(58) Ibid.

For rather different reasons, the PL also entered cabinet in a combative mood. Unlike the PCCh, however, the PL was not concerned with the implementation of González Videla's programme, other than with blocking those parts of which the Liberals did not approve. Rather the PL had one over-riding aim, to keep the PCCh under the strictest scrutiny and to use every opportunity to prevent the growth of Communist influence. To that end, it opposed the appointment of Communist intendentes and gobernadores, helped to block the ratification of Pablo Neruda's appointment as Ambassador to Italy in the Senate, and, according to its own declarations, accepted posts in the public administration solely in order to prevent them from falling into Communist hands.(59)

Indeed, quite apart from its specifically anti-communist activities, the PL behaved from the first more like an opposition than a government party. It campaigned openly against the economic policies of Finance Minister Roberto Wachs, it supported opposition candidates in congressional by-elections and, most important of all, it tried (with the help of Conservatives) to push through Congress a restrictive law on peasant unionisation without consulting or informing the President and the other government parties.(60)

(59) La Hora 19.12.1946.

(60) This law, first presented to Congress in early 1947, was withdrawn on González Videla's insistence, re-introduced after discussions between the PR and the PL, passed by Congress and promulgated on April 30th 1947. La Hora 10.1.1947; 18.1.1947; 2.2.1947; 12.2.1947. El Siglo 30.4.1947. The law severely restricted peasant unionisation which, since November 1946, had been carried out under the normal provisions of the Código del Trabajo. According to Brian Loveman in Struggle in the Countryside: Politics and Rural Labour in Chile 1919-1973 (Indiana, 1976) p170-173, some 300 such unions were created between November 1946 and April 1947 - in contrast to the 34 which had survived from an earlier period of peasant unionisation under Aguirre Cerda.

Liberal hostility was not the only obstacle which the PCCh had to face when it occupied cabinet office. Not surprisingly, it had to endure attacks from both the right-wing opposition and the Socialists. Indeed, the PS took considerable pleasure in repaying the PCCh for attacks which the Communists had made on Socialist government officials in the past. La Opinión accused Communist ministers and officials of causing strikes and of crushing them, of approving price rises, of packing the bureaucracy with party colleagues, of causing disorder in the countryside and of channelling supplies of scarce commodities (like cooking oil) to PCCh members and supporters. (61)

While the PCCh remained on good terms with the President and the PR, it could withstand the attacks of its right and left wing enemies. Unfortunately for the PCCh, its relations with the PR soon became strained. Although the CEN was still technically dominated by left-wing and centrist Radicals, in theory fairly well-disposed towards the PCCh, many had government jobs - or wanted them - and had become oficialistas, that is, more or less unconditional adherents of the government. While a few Radical left-wingers still clung to the policies the PR had pursued since 1944 and demanded the formation of left-wing governments, these were now in a minority on the CEN. Thus, in January, when Radical left-wingers denounced the antics of the PL and demanded the exclusion of Liberals from the government, their voices were drowned by those of the oficialistas who found the actions of the PCCh

(61) La Opinión 16.11.1946; 21.11.1946; 26.11.1946;
5.12.1946; 19.12.1946; 16.1.1947; 15.2.1947.

even more reprehensible.(62) Not only had the PCCh insisted on its fair share of the spoils of office but it had failed to exercise a moderating influence in the field of labour relations. Moreover, the PCCh's intense campaign to unionise the peasantry - made possible by the repeal of one of Aguirre Cerda's decrees prohibiting unionisation in the countryside - alarmed many Radicals who were, at the same time, angered by Communist attacks on Radical government officials who refused to co-operate in that campaign.(63) Shortly after Radical left-wingers had called for the exclusion of Liberals from government, the President of the CEN called openly for an end to the PR's alliance with the PCCh.(64) Partly to conjure with this threat and partly because the government had dealt satisfactorily with a series of industrial disputes since it had come to office, the PCCh announced on February 4th that, henceforth, the strike weapon would only be used in the final resort and that the party would co-operate in a national plan to increase production.(65)

Even though the PCCh made pacifying noises on the industrial front, the rift with the PR continued to grow and, in February, the CEN announced that local Radical organisations were free to choose whether or not they wished to pact with the PCCh in the April municipal elections.(66) For its part, the PL continued on its disruptive course. In February, the PL announced that it would not co-operate with the PCCh and the PR in the appointment of those consejeros to semi-fiscal

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- (62) La Hora 8.1.1947.
(63) Ibid. 20.1.1947.
(64) Ibid. 15.1.1947.
(65) El Siglo 5.2.1947.
(66) La Hora 12.2.1947.

agencies which were within the gift of Congress and, in the same month, Liberal senators helped to block the ratification of the appointment of two congressmen, one Radical and one Communist, as plenipotentiaries to attend the inauguration of the Uruguayan President.(67) Since the appointment had been made by the Radical Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Radical ministers resigned in protest, accusing the PL of disloyalty - even though the Liberal senators had acted against the orders of the PL.(68) The PL resigned too, probably in an attempt to trap the Communist ministers into similar action.(69) But, while the Communists expressed their sympathy for the action of their Radical colleagues, they refused to resign without the consent of the CC and urged the Liberal ministers to return to cabinet, to change their attitude and to co-operate in the struggle for the implementation of González Videla's programme.(70)

Although the February cabinet crisis theoretically gave González Videla the opportunity to re-shape his cabinet, he chose not to take it, rejected all the resignations and, after the PL had given assurances of good behaviour in the future, the tricolour cabinet continued in office.(71) Several factors probably played a part in González Videla's decision - even though he had promised to remove the PCCh from cabinet 'as soon as humanly possible'. First, Liberal indiscipline was hardly an appropriate issue on which to push the

(67) Ibid. 11.2.1947.

(68) Ibid. 14.2.1947.

(69) This, at least, was Ricardo Fonseca's opinion. See the article by him, in Principios, February-March 1947, 'Solución popular a la crisis política', pp3-4.

(70) El Siglo 14.2.1947.

(71) La Hora 14.2.1947.

PCCh from cabinet, particularly since the PCCh made it clear that it was not going to be rushed into such precipitate action and since, in any event, it was finally beginning to exercise a moderating influence in the field of labour relations. Secondly, at that point Radical anger was directed against the PL and, while important sectors of the PR were showing signs of increasing disillusionment with the PCCh, the approach of the April municipal elections argued against any action which might upset the electoral arrangements which many Radical organisations had with the PCCh.

After the February cabinet crisis, however, pressures inside the PR for an end to the alliance with the PCCh grew and, with the encouragement of the Liberals who pledged their support for such a solution, the oficialistas began to advocate the formation of an exclusively Radical cabinet.(72) At the same time, in the run up to the April municipal elections, the right-wing and socialist press began to intensify their campaign against the PCCh - a development which led González Videla to go to the PCCh's defence.(73) However, the results of the municipal elections gave the President both cause and opportunity to force the PCCh out of the cabinet. In those elections, the PCCh's support increased from 32,219 votes in April 1944 to 91,204 while in 'real' terms, that is in terms of male voters eligible to vote in the congressional elections,

(72) Perhaps the first overt sign that this idea was gaining hold in the PR, was when the President of the CEN felt it necessary to formally deny rumours that he asked González Videla to form such a cabinet.

La Hora 27.2.1947.

(73) In early March, for example, González Videla declared that anti-communism was fascist-inspired.

El Siglo 3.3.1947.

the PCCh had almost doubled its support since March 1945.(74) In contrast with the PCCh's dramatic gains, the PR suffered losses which, though slight, were sufficient to give those Radicals who advocated the termination of the PR's association with the PCCh additional strength.(75) The PL, for its part, managed, by a rather tortuous piece of logic, to convince itself that the results represented the massive rejection of Communism by the Chilean people - and it declared that it would resign from the cabinet forthwith.(76) Faced by the Liberals' decision to resign and by the growing pressure from the PR for an all-Radical cabinet, González Videla asked for the resignations of the Communist ministers, a request with which they complied on April 16th 1947.(77) González Videla immediately formed a new cabinet which included Radicals and a few technocrats and, while describing the new administration as a 'backwards step', the PCCh declared its support for it in so far as it acted in line with González Videla's electoral platform.(78)

There were several reasons why the PCCh accepted its dismissal from the cabinet with reasonably good grace,

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- (74) La Dirección del Registro Electoral y el Partido Comunista ante la Ley de Defensa de la Democracia (Santiago, 1951) p8. Estadística Chilena, 1944, pp637-657. The number of 'political' votes (male votes) rose from 46,133 in March 1945 to 78,336 in April 1947.
- (75) In 1944, the PR received 105,001 'political' votes and 18,137 municipal votes; in 1947, it polled 92,032 'political' votes and 18,538 municipal votes. Estadística Chilena 1944, pp637-657. La Dirección del Registro Electoral op. cit., p8. The PCCh claimed that the PR lost where it did not pact with the Communists. El Siglo 9.4.1947.
- (76) La Hora 11.4.1947.
- (77) El Siglo 16.4.1947.
- (78) Ibid. 17.4.1947.

In the first place, González Videla allowed those Communists who occupied non-ministerial positions in the government and public administration to keep their posts, and he had apparently intimated to the PCCh that if conditions permitted he would invite the PCCh to return to cabinet in a few months time.(79) Secondly, while the PCCh had been enthusiastic about some of the government's earlier actions - actions like the repeal of the decree prohibiting peasant unionisation and Chile's veto of Spain's application to join the United Nations - it had grown increasingly disgruntled with the government's slowness to implement other parts of the electoral platform and increasingly critical of its economic policies. By April, it had become obvious that the government was not going to introduce the sort of fundamental economic changes which the PCCh advocated but, instead, was intent on applying the old solutions to Chile's economic difficulties - balancing the budget, cutting public expenditure and stabilising wages but not prices.(80) Apart from its objections to the government's economic policies, the PCCh bitterly opposed a law, recently approved by Congress, which severely restricted peasant unionisation and which seemed likely to be approved by the President.(81) Third, the PCCh probably recognised that in the current international climate,

(79) Luis Corvalán op. cit., p196.

(80) El Siglo 9.4.1947.

(81) The law restricted the number of petitions which could be presented to the landowners to one a year - outside the times of harvest and sowing - restricted unionisation to farms which employed over 20 workers (ten of whom had to be literate) and wage petitions had to have the support of 55% of the workers. La Hora 19.4.1947; 26.4.1947. According to Brian Loveman op. cit., p173, agricultural workers presented 400 wage petitions in 1947, 24 in 1948 and 11 in 1951 - showing that the law and the repression of the PCCh had a marked effect.

González Videla could not be expected to rule with a minority government in which the PCCh was a major partner. Such a government would have had to contend with the hostility of the USA and of a majority in Congress and would have had to face, within a relatively short period, constitutional crises and extra-constitutional attempts to oust it from office.(82)

That the pressure generated by the Cold War was the decisive, if indirect factor, in the PCCh's ejection from cabinet office seems to be clear. While those pressures had affected Chilean politics in one way or another since the latter part of 1945, they intensified considerably in the early months of 1947. On March 12th of that year, President Truman announced what came to be known as the Truman Doctrine - the US's commitment to contain the menace of international communism in Europe and elsewhere in the world, a commitment which was followed by a series of economic and military plans designed to bolster the Western World against Soviet Communist aggression.(83) The reaction of many Western governments to what was, in effect, Truman's battle cry, was swift. As one contributor to La Hora pointed out, in the three months after the March 12th speech, Communists were forced from government in Belgium, France, Italy and Chile - while in Brazil, the Communist Party was outlawed.(84)

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- (82) According to Sergio Sotomayor Carta Abierta de un ex-militante del PC (Santiago, 1953) pp61-62 and Luis Corvalán op. cit., p196, the US State Department had already indicated in February 1947 that economic aid would not be given to those countries which pursued foreign policies unacceptable to the USA.
- (83) Walter La Feber America, Russia and the Cold War (New York, 1976) pp58-59.
- (84) La Hora 6.7.1947. Article by Jaime Miravitaes.

González Videla himself admitted that Cold War pressures did play a part in the PCCh's departure from office. In his opening address to Congress on May 21st, he declared that in the current 'dramatic and disturbed' world conditions, no country could be immune from the 'feeling of fear, almost of panic, which the rivalries of the Great Powers have raised in recent months'.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Although González Videla declared that the 'feeling of fear' had caused the PL to resign from cabinet, implying that he, himself, was merely responding to the situation which that action had created, there seems little reason to doubt that he was just as affected by the deteriorating international climate as the PL. Indeed, the assurances he gave to the British and US Ambassadors in October and November 1946 show that he was well aware of the need to allay the fears of the Western Powers. By early 1947, that need had become even more pressing because of Chile's parlous economic situation and, parallel with the intensification of the Cold War, Chile's need for US economic aid had become more acute. Indeed, a week or so before he had asked the Communist ministers for their resignations, González Videla had dispatched a special mission to the USA to seek economic assistance and it seems highly probable that the two events were connected. Certainly, in the weeks before the economic mission departed, El Siglo was publishing articles which argued, with some desperation, that Chile could survive without US economic aid, that a Third World War was not in the offing and that there was no evidence to suggest that the United States gave preferential treatment

(85) Ibid. 22.5.1947.

to governments of which they approved.(86)

In reacting to the international climate - and to Chile's need for US economic aid - González Videla was following a path already trodden by Aguirre Cerda and Ríos. Aguirre Cerda had broken his links with the PCCh in 1940, partly at least because Chile needed US aid, while similar pressures helped to persuade Ríos to rupture Chile's relations with the Axis powers in 1943.(87) Moreover, while Aguirre Cerda and Ríos resisted domestic and international pressure to outlaw the PCCh in 1941 and 1946, it seems unlikely that either of González Videla's predecessors would have acted very differently had they been subjected to the same intense pressures.

Although the PCCh apparently departed from the cabinet on good terms with the President, relations between them grew steadily cooler after April 1947. At a National Conference held in Santiago in May, Ricardo Fonseca accused the US of backing reactionary and corrupt governments throughout the world, poured scorn on the idea that a Third World War was in the offing and denounced the USA's military and economic plans for Latin America as inimical to Chile's sovereignty and independence.(88) However, at the same time, Fonseca predicted that the capitalist world would soon be experiencing an economic crisis even more devastating than that of 1929, and he urged the workers to mobilise against rising prices and evictions and for the implementation of González Videla's

(86) See, for example, an article by Orlando Millas 'Es posible mantener un gobierno a disgusto de Wall St?' El Siglo 5.3.1947. See also the editorial in El Siglo 4.4.1947.

(87) See Chapters 5 and 6 of this work, pp251-253, p305.

(88) El Siglo 24.5.1947.

electoral platform.(89) In June, on the occasion of a bus strike in Santiago, the PCCh's more belligerent attitude produced the first serious public confrontation with the President when government attempts to crush the strike by applying the internal security law produced street incidents in which four 'rioters' were shot by the police.(90) The PCCh blamed the employers' intransigence for the strike but since the government's failure to enforce a wages agreement had given rise to the strike in the first place, it blamed the government for the bloodshed.(91) González Videla reacted angrily to those charges and accused the PCCh of responsibility for the bloodshed since it had either been unable or unwilling to restrain those of its supporters who were involved in the strike movement.(92) Moreover, he charged the PCCh with 'false demagoguery' and rejected the notion that he had broken his pledge not to use force against the people, promising, with uncanny inaccuracy, that he would never use force 'to curtail the rights the Constitution and the social laws guarantee'.(93) Just as ominous for the future as this first public confrontation between González Videla and the PCCh was the political resolution adopted by the PR at a National Convention held in Santiago during the bus strike. At that Convention, a motion calling for the formation of a left-wing cabinet was defeated and one which pledged support for the current government and which prevented the PR from serving in cabinets with any single

(89) Ibid.
(90) Ibid. 11.6.1947.
(91) Ibid. 14.6.1947.
(92) Ibid.
(93) La Hora 15.6.1947.

party which professed social and economic doctrines antagonistic to those held by the PR, was approved.(94) Although, in theory, this resolution did not rule out a Communist return to government, in practice, since no right-wing party was now willing to share office with the PCCh, it marked the end of a decade of Radical-Communist co-operation.

The growing friction between the PCCh and González Videla appears to have been closely paralleled by the difficulties which the government was having in securing US economic aid. According to Fonseca, the special economic mission which had been sent to the US in April had returned only with a demand that an outstanding six million dollar debt be repaid before new loans were arranged, while a US mission which visited Chile in May, apparently insisted on a series of conditions before it would approve the payment of loans totalling 26 million dollars.(95) Amongst those conditions, according to evidence cited by the Socialist historian Jorge Barría Serón, was one which demanded the total exclusion of Communists from all government office.(96) In any event, after González Videla's return from a Pan American conference held in Rio de Janeiro in July, a conference at which he endorsed US plans for continental military co-operation, much to the disapproval of the PCCh, he began what proved to be the final offensive against the PCCh.(97) In early August, after protracted negotiations with all political parties except the PCCh,

(94) Ibid. 9.6.1947.

(95) El Siglo 24.5.1947.

(96) Jorge Barría Serón Trayectoria y estructura del movimiento sindical chileno 1946-62 (Santiago, 1963) p5.
The evidence was an article in the US publication Business Week 8.11.1947.

(97) La Hora 26.6.1947; 28.6.1947.

González Videla announced the formation of a cabinet of administration in which an Armed Service chief, Vice Admiral Holger, held the post of Minister of the Interior.(98)

The PCCh declared that the new cabinet was yet another backward step and announced that the choice which faced Chile was now quite clear - popular democracy or dictatorship.(99)

In line with this analysis, the PCCh called on the proletariat to develop 'to the maximum' the mobilisation of the masses and to influence events, giving popular solutions to the problems which faced the country.(100)

In the weeks which followed, the PCCh supported a series of strike actions and launched an increasingly powerful campaign against rising prices in general and the rising price of bread in particular. When coal miners and rail-workers struck, in part at least to protest against rising prices, González Videla accused the PCCh of obstructing his plans to combat price speculation and of launching revolutionary strikes.(101)

On August 19th, he declared that all government posts held by Communists were now vacant and asked Congress to grant him Special Powers to deal with the situation created by the PCCh's revolutionary demagogy and by the unscrupulous machinations of the speculators.(102)

On August 20th and 21st, Congress granted the Special Powers which the President had called for and the government immediately imposed a state of emergency on the coal region.(103)

The PCCh's reaction to these events was to argue that the current social

(98) Ibid. 2.8.1947.

(99) El Siglo 3.8.1947; 11.8.1947.

(100) Ibid. 11.8.1947.

(101) Ibid. 20.8.1947.

(102) Ibid.

(103) Ibid. 22.8.1947.

unrest was caused solely by the rising cost of living and to deny vehemently that the strike actions it had supported had any revolutionary objective, pointing to the fact that the strikers had returned to work immediately the Special Powers had been granted.(104) Nevertheless, while the PCCh insisted that it would not, under any circumstances, support extra-constitutional attempts to oust the legitimate authorities from office, it also insisted that it would continue to defend the rights and interests of the workers and support their struggle for better wages and conditions.(105)

After González Videla had obtained his Special Powers, the PCCh tried to step back from a direct confrontation with the government and without fundamentally changing its position, softened its attacks on the government and called for the regrouping of popular forces. However, by that time it was already too late. The ADCh had ceased to function, in any real sense, after the April municipal elections and the PCCh's departure from cabinet office and, in late August, the PR broke its final link with the PCCh by ordering its delegates to retire from the Communist-dominated CTCh.(106) Although some elements in the PR and in other parties continued to be fairly well disposed towards the PCCh, it was, to all intents and purposes, completely isolated by the time its final confrontation with the government came.

The occasion for that confrontation was a strike in the coal fields in early October 1947. The coal miners, who had exhausted all the procedures laid down in the Código del

(104) Ibid. 20.8.1947.
(105) Ibid. 23.8.1947.
(106) Ibid. 22.8.1947.

Trabajo, declared a legal strike from October 4th - after rejecting government suggestions of voluntary arbitration.(107) On the very day the strike became effective, the government decreed a wage settlement which conceded most of the miners' demands and ordered them to return to work.(108) When the miners refused, the government blamed the PCCh for their resistance and accused the Communists of launching a revolutionary strike designed to overthrow the state.(109) The government accepted offers from the PS to supply workers to replace the strikers while the Army recalled many of them to the colours.(110) On October 8th, the government announced that it had uncovered an international communist plot, based on the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav embassies, aimed at upsetting the national economy - and on October 21st, Chile broke off diplomatic relations with those countries and with Russia.(111) Parallel with these developments, Communist leaders and activists were arrested in the coal zone - arrests which, interestingly enough, the mining companies found to be excessive - El Siglo was forced to stop publication and the persecution was extended to other regions of the country.(112) Despite these measures, the miners continued to show resistance until October 21st, when the Army thwarted an attempt to bring work to a stop by two shifts of miners who refused to surface after their shifts were over.(113)

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- (107) Considering that roughly 15,500 miners worked in the coal industry in 1947, the results of the strike ballot were very impressive. Out of 15,189 votes cast, 15,104 were for strike action. Ibid. 27.1.1947.
- (108) Ibid. 5.10.1947. The decree gave wages increases of up to 40%.
- (109) La Hora 6.10.1947.
- (110) Ibid. 16.10.1947.
- (111) Ibid. 9.10.1947; 22.10.1947.
- (112) Ibid. 23.10.1947.
- (113) La Opinión 22.10.1947.

Was there, as González Videla claimed, a revolutionary Communist plot designed to overthrow the constitutional order? In any real and immediate sense, there clearly was not. While the refusal of the coal miners to return to work might well be described as an act of civil disobedience or even of rebellion, it was not accompanied by any PCCh attempt to seize power - and the wave of strikes which affected Chile during the coal strike and later were movements of protest against the government's treatment of the coal miners and the PCCh rather than part of a synchronised revolutionary plan.(114) Indeed, while the PCCh may have encouraged strike actions and popular mobilisation in the belief that it was hastening the advent of the capitalist crisis which it had predicted, it can have had no illusion whatsoever that Chile was ripe for revolution at that time. There were no indications to suggest that the ruling classes were in the grip of a profound crisis or that they were irrevocably divided - on the contrary, whatever their differences, all the major right-wing political forces represented in Congress had approved González Videla's application for special powers in August.(115) Furthermore, there were few indications that the Armed Forces were seriously divided or that their loyalty to the established order had been seriously undermined.(116) Finally, despite its dramatic growth since September 1946, the PCCh had lost all its

(114) Most of them lasted for limited periods ranging from 2 to 24 hours. See, for example, ibid. 9.10.1947; 25.10.1947 and 4.12.1947 for accounts of protest strikes in the nitrate fields, copper mines and the railways.

(115) El Siglo 22.8.1947.

(116) Although rumours of military plots were fairly common González Videla, like Aguirre Cerda, took the precaution of retiring high ranking officers who did not have his confidence.

allies both inside and outside the working class movement and was still far from being the tightly disciplined organisation of the bolshevik ideal. In sum, none of the 'objective' and 'subjective' conditions for revolution laid down by Communist theory existed, and it seems extremely unlikely that a party as cautious and hard-headed as the PCCh would have allowed itself to be dragged into a revolutionary adventure with such small chances of success - even on the 'orders' of the Soviet Union.(117)

Nevertheless, it is also clear that the PCCh did have political reasons for supporting strike actions and popular mobilisation in the months leading up to October 1947 - despite its protestations that it was only motivated by the social and economic grievances of the people. However, the PCCh's intention was not to force González Videla from office or to disrupt the constitutional order - events which could only result in the immediate establishment of a repressive dictatorial regime. Rather, by exercising popular pressure, the PCCh sought to persuade the President to change direction, to return to his alliance with the PCCh, to abandon his support for the USA in the international field and to press ahead with the implementation of his electoral platform. When it became clear that the tactics of popular mobilisation were not producing the desired results, as it did so appear in August, the PCCh attempted to step back from the confrontation which appeared to be imminent. However, by that time the die was cast and the government was

(117) For a description and examination of the Comintern's theories on the necessary conditions for revolution see K. McKenzie's The Comintern and World Revolution (London, 1964) pp83-97.

intent on launching an offensive against the PCCh - both to comply with US requirements and to restore labour discipline at a time of considerable social unrest. The pretext for that offensive came in October when the coal miners refused to return to work - with the encouragement and support of the PCCh.

Why then, did the miners refuse to return to work? After all, the coal region had been declared an emergency zone and placed under military control in August, and the miners can have had few illusions that any resistance to government orders on their part would not provoke firm measures from the authorities. The available evidence suggests that the government was at least as responsible for the miners' refusal to return to work as was the PCCh. In the first place, in September, the government had ordered the prosecution of miners' leaders for their part in the August stoppages - hardly an action designed to placate the mine workers.(118) Secondly, although the government had been negotiating with the miners until the very eve of the day the legal strike was due to begin, it did not, as was customary, inform them of the details of the decree with which they were to be ordered back to work.(119) Third, the actual decree did not explicitly give the commander of the emergency zone the authority to order a return to work - but, instead, gave him powers to contract new personnel and set out new wage scales.(120) Fourthly, according to Galo

(118) El Siglo 9.9.1947.

(119) Principios, November 1947, article by Galo González 'Hacia un Frente Patriótico de Liberación Social y Nacional', p6.

(120) Ibid. The unusual form of the decree was also criticised by the FN. La Hora 7.10.1947.

González, the decree was implemented only two hours after the strike had commenced and before it had become legal.(121)

It may be, of course, that some of the 'errors' which the government committed in its handling of the situation were the product of its haste to get the miners back to work since coal stocks were dangerously low.(122) However, given the political situation, it seems more probable that the government deliberately, rather than accidentally, mishandled the situation in order to provoke the miners' resistance.

On the other hand, it is equally clear that the PCCh adopted an unusually intransigent attitude throughout the whole affair. After all, during the Second World War, the PCCh had used its influence to curb industrial unrest and it had accepted, though not without protest, President Ríos's use of emergency powers to curtail legal strikes. While it is true that the miners' conflict was legal and justified and while there was at least an element of government provocation in the miners' resistance, the wage settlement decreed by the government gave the miners much of what they had asked for. Why, then, did not the PCCh urge a return to work? The answer to that question appears to lie in the Cold War and in the PCCh's belief that, whatever it did, the government was intent on thrusting it into clandestinity.

Although a semblance of normality was restored when El Siglo recommenced publication on November 1st, from early October until July 1948 when the Ley de Defensa de la Democracia

(121) Principios, November, 1947, article by Galó González.
(122) La Hora 7.10.1947.

was passed, the PCCh functioned in semi-clandestinity. Through the censored columns of El Siglo, however, the PCCh continued to defend strike actions when they occurred, to criticise price rises and to denounce US imperialism - if in the most moderate language. The PCCh also made as much as it could of the signs of divergence between the PR and the PS and gave a warm, if reserved, welcome to FRAS, a new coalition which included the FN and other small left and centre parties.(123) Indeed, the PCCh, with the help of Marmaduke Grove and the remnants of the PSA, even managed to create a new coalition of its own - the Frente Nacional Democrático(FND).(124) Formed to fight the Ley de Defensa de la Democracia, the FND had little strength or success - although, in May 1948, it did fight a congressional by-election, giving its support to a candidate backed by the FRAS and the Partido Conservador.(125)

Even while the PCCh was permitted a slender legal existence, the authorities continued to arrest and detain Communist leaders and activists and were able, through those arrests, to begin a process of 'cleaning-up' the trade unions. New elections were held to replace those trade union officials who had been detained and, while some unions actively resisted the election of new officials and others continued to elect Communists to official positions when the Ley de Defensa was well on its way to the statute book, resistance, on the whole,

(123) El Siglo 5.3.1948.

(124) Ibid. 21.4.1948; 22.4.1948; 28.5.1948.

(125) Ibid. 10.5.1948. The candidate supported by the FRAS, the FND and the Conservatives won.

was short-lived.(126) The main reason for this was not that the PCCh had lost the confidence of the workers but rather that the legal role which trade unions played in labour relations militated against prolonged resistance - since without a legally constituted union, the workers were denied the protection and the benefits which the Código del Trabajo bestowed upon them.(127) However, while government persecution continued, the first signs of clandestine resistance, in the form of underground newspapers, began to appear.(128)

In April 1948, González Videla completed the process he had begun a year earlier by presenting a bill to proscribe the PCCh to Congress. This bill, which in due course became the Ley de Defensa de la Democracia and was dubbed the Ley Maldita by the PCCh, prohibited the 'existence, organisation, action and propaganda' of the party and prevented Communists from standing or voting in public elections and from holding government or trade union office.(129) Although resisted by the PCCh, the FN, the bulk of the PS, by some congressmen from other parties (including the PR and the Partido Conservador), the Ley Maldita was approved by overwhelming majorities in both chambers of Congress and promulgated on September 3rd,

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- (126) Elections were simply disrupted by the PCCh's adherents. See, for an example of this process Archivo de la Dirección General del Trabajo, Oficios, 1947, Vol. 37, Ref. No. 11108. According to La Opinión 14.6.1948. Communists were still being elected to official positions, though in reduced numbers, to unions in Sewell, Potrerillos, Lota and Coronel in that month.
- (127) Without a properly constituted union, members were deprived of a number of benefits, including sick pay and funeral expenses. Archivo de la Dirección General del Trabajo, Oficios, 1947, Vol. 39, Ref. No. 11250.
- (128) La Opinión 27.2.1948; 28.2.1948.
- (129) La Dirección del Registro Electoral op. cit., ppl-4.

1948 - almost two years to the day of González Videla's election to the Presidency.(130) Under the Ley Maldita, 40,847 voters were denounced as Communists and 26,474 male voters and 1,826 female and foreign voters were struck off the electoral roll.(131) After the processes of appeal had been dealt with, 23,351 people lost their voting rights - over 5,000 from Antofagasta province and over 3,000 each from the provinces of Santiago, Coquimbo and Concepción.(132) The effects which the proscription of the PCCh had in other directions was also striking. During 1948, for example, strike activity fell drastically, largely because of the persecution of the PCCh - although a declining rate of inflation and wage awards generally in excess of rises in the cost of living also played a part in the process.(133) In any event, in 1948 there were 20 legal strikes involving 7,142 workers - in contrast to 37 strikes involving 17,216 workers in 1947.(134) Illegal strikes and stoppages fell from 127 in 1947 to 6 in 1948 while the numbers of workers involved fell from 51,069 to 1,203 over the same period.(135) The effects of the Ley Maldita on provinces traditionally dominated by the PCCh were very marked - eliminations from the electoral roll in Antofagasta, for example, practically wiped out the PCCh's electoral

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- (130) The Ley de Defensa was approved by 93 votes to 20 in the Chamber of Deputies and by 31 to 8 in the Senate.
 (131) La Dirección del Registro Electoral op. cit., pp43-48.
 (132) Ibid.
 (133) In 1948, inflation ran at 18% as compared to 33.5% in 1947. Wage increases during 1948 for the coal, copper and nitrate workers were 20%, 19% and 16% respectively. Manufacturing wages rose by 23%. Anibal Pinto op. cit. p205. Estadística Chilena 1949, p638; 1948, p705.
 (134) Estadística Chilena 1949, p707.
 (135) Ibid.

support in that province while in the same province illegal strikes and stoppages fell from 22 involving some 13,000 workers in 1947 to none at all in 1948.(136)

Although the principal target of the Ley Maldita was the PCCh, the issue of whether or not to outlaw it had profound effects on other political parties. In the Conservative Party, the issue precipitated a final confrontation between the more moderate and more right-wing elements (the latter eventually left to found the Partido Conservador Tradicionalista).(137) In the PS, it led to a battle for control between the virulently anti-communist current led by Bernardo Ibáñez and Juan Bautista Rossetti, who wanted the PS to collaborate with González Videla in government, and the anti-collaborationists who had opposed the Ley Maldita - the latter group founding the Partido Socialista Popular in 1949.(138) For its part, the left-wing of the PR also broke away to form the Partido Radical Doctrinaria in 1948.(139) Indeed, of all the major parties, only the PL seems to have survived the conflict over the Ley Maldita without ill-effects.

Until late 1947, when the PCCh was forced to retreat into clandestinity, it had reaped considerable rewards from its association with González Videla. Perhaps the most obvious of those rewards were the ministerial and other government

(136) Archivo de la Dirección General del Trabajo Memorias for Antofagasta for 1947 and 1948.

(137) Sergio Fernández Larraín's Aspectos de la división del Partido Conservador (Santiago, 1950) pp3-52, contains a good account of the division in the Conservative Party.

(138) Alejandro Chelén Rojas Trayectoria del Socialismo pl21.

(139) El Siglo 4.3.1948.

posts it received in return for its support for González Videla's presidential candidacy. The PCCh was allotted three ministries in González Videla's first government, Ways and Public Works, Agriculture, and Lands and Colonisation, ministries of little importance but, nonetheless, cabinet posts.(140) The PCCh was also given 5 out of the 24 intendencias (including that for Santiago), 16 gobernaciones and 30 out of the 90 advisory posts on semi-fiscal agencies within the gift of the President.(141) However, while possession of government office clearly increased the PCCh's power and influence, it was not able to reap the maximum advantage from its changed circumstances. The President kept a close check on the Communist ministers and their activities while they and the lesser Communist government officials were subjected to the hostile scrutiny of the opposition parties and press.(142) Moreover, Communist government officials had to contend with the ill-disguised antagonism of permanent bureaucrats as well as that of their fellow political appointees.(143) For these reasons, then, and because the PCCh's stay in office was relatively brief, Communist penetration of the state administration was probably less than its enemies suggested.

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- (140) The most important of these ministries was Ways and Public Works which, on average, dispensed 8% of the government's expenditure. Agriculture dispensed just over 1% and Lands and Colonisation, 0.3%. Estadística Chilena 1950, pp510-511.
- (141) El Siglo 10.12.1946; 11.12.1946; La Hora 3.1.1947.
- (142) FOR FO 371/52004 AS 7440/16/9, Report from Lecho to Bevin, dated 22.11.1946.
- (143) Juan Chacón Corona, for example, had to contend with considerable hostility as Vice President of the Instituto de Economía Agrícola, José Miguel Varas Chacón, pp122-123. María Marchant, originally nominated by the PCCh - and González Videla - for the position of Intendente of Santiago, was rejected by the Controlería General de la República.

More important to the PCCh than the actual possession of government office was the opportunity to influence the formulation and conduct of government policy. In the short term, Communist influence and pressure appears to have played a large part in persuading González Videla to withdraw the circular prohibiting peasant unionisation and to block the admission of Spain to the U.N. Other achievements to which the PCCh could lay some claim include Finance Minister Roberto Wacholz's decision not to press ahead with the savage economies and credit restriction which he had originally envisaged, the creation of the National Economic Council and the decision of the Director del Registro Electoral to allow the PCCh to stand in elections under its own name.(144) In the longer run, however, the PCCh was unable to defend even these achievements, let alone persuade González Videla to press ahead with the fundamental social and economic reforms he had promised to implement. Still less was the PCCh able to persuade him to pursue an independent course in the Cold War.

Despite the PCCh's failure to achieve many of its stated objectives, it experienced a massive growth in membership and in electoral support while it was in government. According to Humberto Abarca, the PCCh grew by some 52% between October 1946 and May 1947 - an increase which may well

(144) El Siglo 7.1.1947. Between 1932 and 1947, the Director of the Registro Electoral refused to allow the PCCh to fight elections under its own name, basing his arguments on electoral and internal security laws. The PCCh evaded this prohibition by inscribing its candidates on the lists of other allied parties and by standing as the Partido Democrático Nacional in the 1937 congressional elections and from 1941 as the Partido Progresista Nacional.

have brought total membership up to the 50,000 mark.(145)
Most of the gains made were amongst agricultural and industrial workers, but white-collar workers and members of the 'petty bourgeoisie' also entered the party in increasing numbers.(146)
Geographically, the most dramatic gains were evidently registered in the Norte Chico and in the rural provinces of the centre and southern end of the Central Valley.(147) Even greater than the growth of membership was the increase in the PCCh's electoral support. As has already been mentioned, the PCCh almost doubled its support between March 1945 and April 1947, the most impressive gains, in this case, being registered in the south and in Santiago.(148)

As had occurred during 1939, when the PCCh experienced other dramatic increases in its membership and electoral support, organisational problems did not loom large in its preoccupations during 1946 and 1947. The PCCh's lack of concern with organisational problems did not mean that these had ceased to exist but rather that the leadership was more concerned with the pressing political problems which confronted it - in 1946, the battle against the Duhalde government and the presidential elections, and in 1947 the struggle to remain in government against mounting national and international pressures. To some extent, as well, the lack of concern was probably a reflection of the fact that due to the organisational improvements made during the war years, the CC had something

(145) Humberto Abarca Organizando la defensa de Chile
(Santiago, 1947) p10.

(146) Ibid. pp10-11.

(147) Ibid.

(148) Ibid. p15. The PCCh vote in Santiago increased from 13,000 to 26,000 between March 1945 and April 1947.

like a professional and efficient party machine at its disposal.

However, in May 1947, after the PCCh had been forced from the cabinet, the leadership turned its attention to organisational problems once more. Humberto Abarca, in his report to the PCCh's National Conference which met in Santiago in that month, stated that the work of the CC continued to show improvements and that its individual members had shown greater responsibility and firmness in their performance of party tasks.(149) He also reported that there had been an increase in the number of trained and effective cadres and that most of the CRs showed some sign of improvement.(150) On the other hand, dues payments remained at a low level - on average, about 38% of the membership regularly paid dues - and few members paid the percentage of their salaries to party funds that the new PCCh statutes, adopted at the XIII Congress in December 1945, established.(151) Moreover, fluctuations in membership tended to be high and there was a general lack of political education - and in some cases, training courses for cadres were begun but not completed.(152) Some CRs, according to Abarca, continued to rely on the energies of a handful of their members, a few were seriously divided by personalist conflicts and others still did not function according to a concrete plan.(153) Abarca also made particular mention of the PCCh's trade union activists and leaders who evidently suffered from

(149) Ibid.

(150) Ibid. p13.

(151) Ibid. p11. The best region for dues was Tarapacá at 57% - the worst, Linares at 10%.

(152) Ibid. p13.

(153) Ibid. pp13-14.

a high rate of turnover in their number, who still suffered from 'caudillist' tendencies and who were still loath to practice democratic methods - and share trade union office with others of different political persuasions.(154) Finally, Abarca warned against the growth of 'legalistic illusions' amongst the members - a tendency to wait for Communist government officials to act instead of throwing themselves into the task of mobilising the masses - and against the continued threat of Masonry.(155)

The PCCh's general lack of concern with organisational problems during 1946 and 1947 is paralleled by the absence of any evidence to suggest that the CC had to deal with any serious internal conflicts during those years or face any real challenge to its authority. Indeed, serious clashes between ministers and government officials and their parties - common enough in Chilean politics - appear to have been almost unknown in the PCCh. This is not to say, however, that there were no frictions between the CC and the PCCh government officials. Although the CC expressed a general satisfaction with the work of the Communist ministers in the first months of office, in May 1947, it criticised them for a lack of combativity and of rhythm in the performance of their work and the CC declared that without its vigilance, the tendency of ministers and other government officials to fall into 'opportunist deviations' of the left and right, might well have had serious consequences.(156) The CC also indicted the tendency, on

(154) Ibid. pp8-10.
(155) Ibid. p14.
(156) Ibid. pp14-15.

the part of some Communist government officials, to find 'jobs for the boys'.(157) Nevertheless, of the fifty or so Communists who held government office through presidential appointment, few indeed incurred the CC's active displeasure for failings or mistakes committed during their tenure and only one of these, Cipriano Pontigo, a consejero in the Instituto de Economía Agrícola(IEA) appears to have been subjected to formal disciplinary measures for his offences.(158)

One of the main reasons why the CC did not have many difficulties with its ministers or other government officials was its policy of selecting capable men from the second rank of the party's hierarchy for those posts. Thus, Miguel Concha, the Minister of Agriculture, had not served on the CC before his appointment while Victor Contreras, the Minister of Lands and Colonisation, admittedly a regional dirigente of note, had not served on the CC since 1941.(159) Even Contreras Labarca, the Minister of Ways and Public Works, who, as Secretary General of the PCCh, seems an exception to this rule, had, in fact, lost all effective power at the XIII Party Congress in December 1945.(160) Indeed, of the 33 members of the CC, only six

(157) Ibid.

(158) El Popular, Antofagasta, 1.10.1947. Pontigo evidently accepted price rises in wheat and flour when the PCCh was opposed to them. He was suspended from all party work for six months and from his functions as a deputy in Congress - except for those occasions when his vote was needed. Pontigo had a long and distinguished career in the PCCh after this incident - until his death in the early 1970s.

(159) Victor Contreras was an ex-Mayor of Tocopilla and a member of the CC from 1939. He was demoted from the CC in 1941. El Siglo 2.1.1942. Miguel Concha was a professional man who had studied economics in Mexico. He was active in white collar trade unionism and became Vice President of the Federación de Empleados Particulares. During clandestinity, he evidently drifted away from the PCCh and later took a post with the Ibáñez administration(1952-58).

(160) See above, Chapter 6, pp322-326.

held government office by presidential appointment and of these, excluding Contreras Labarca, only two can be considered to have come from the CC's ruling group.(161) The same pattern emerges with regard to the PCCh's provincial organisations - few regional officers of importance were given government posts.(162) This is not to say that the men appointed to government office were nonentities but only that at the time of their appointment they no longer held important posts in the PCCh's organisation.

Another indication that the PCCh was not troubled by serious internal conflict at the time the persecution commenced may be found in the fact that very few members were expelled for defection and treason. Indeed, in 1947, only one Communist, of no great weight in the PCCh but who did hold a government post of some importance, refused to resign from that post and declared that the CC was suffering from 'romanticism' and 'revolutionary infantilism' - offences for which he

(161) The six CC members who held government office through presidential appointment were Juan Guerra, José Valenzuela (both congressmen as well) who had posts in the Caja de Crédito Agrícola, Volodia Teitelboim, consejero to the Banco Central, Contreras Labarca, Minister of Ways and Public Works, Juan Chacón Corona, Vice President of the IEA, Bernardo Araya, consejero to the National Economic Council. The two 'inner circle' CC members were probably Chacón Corona, Secretary of the CC's Agricultural Commission and Bernardo Araya, recently promoted to the Secretary Generalship of the CTCh and onto the CC's Political Commission. El Siglo 7.11.1946; La Hora 3.1.1947.

(162) Some familiar names appear in the list of González Videla's nomination for advisory positions on semi-fiscal agencies; like Higinio Godoy, one-time CC provincial activist, Francisco Devia, Mario Hermosilla, Oscar Sepúlveda and Pedro Moya - all regional activists of note. However, of these, only one - Pedro Moya appears to have had a seat on a regional organisation at the time of his appointment.

was promptly expelled.(163) Although many Communists probably drifted away from the PCCh with some rapidity during the first year of clandestinity, according to Galo González only four Communists of any standing had to be expelled for desertion, and only one of these was a member of the CC.(164) Thus, in contrast to 1927, when the PCCh suffered from serious defections, particularly amongst its congressmen, it entered clandestinity apparently united and in relatively good order.(165)

Indeed, despite the PCCh's fall into clandestinity in 1947, the immediate post war period was, in many ways, one of great, if transitory, successes for the party. The PCCh increased its membership and its electoral support considerably and broadened its appeal to more diverse social sectors. It also occupied cabinet office for the first time in its history and emerged from that experience relatively unsullied and without having compromised its reputation in the eyes of its supporters. The successes which the PCCh enjoyed during 1946 and 1947 enabled it to retreat into clandestinity with its morale high - determined to survive and to continue the struggle for sweeping changes in Chile.

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- (163) El Despertar, Iquique, 13.12.1947. The post was the Vice-Presidency of the Caja de Crédito Minero and the man was Julio Ascuí Latorre. So far as can be ascertained from the available evidence, Ascuí Latorre had not occupied any post of importance in either local or central PCCh organisation before his appointment.
- (164) Galo González La Lucha por la formación del PCCh pl2. González names Hermosilla, Icaza, Albornoz and Guerra as 'traitors' - but does not detail their crimes. Hermosilla was a fairly prominent figure in the CR Santiago at one time and held a presidential appointment to the Caja Reaseguradora. Albornoz was once prominent in the CR Antofagasta and Guerra was a Congressman and a CC member - and an activist of prominence in the Antofagasta region since the early 1920s.
- (165) See Chapter 3, ppl14-131 for a description of the PCCh's experiences under Itza.

The PCCh and its place in Chilean politics

Between 1922 and 1947 the PCCh moved from the margins into the mainstream of Chilean politics and acquired some of its more striking characteristics both as an organisation and as an actor in the Chilean political process. However, in many ways the PCCh's general character was already established before it came into existence. The POS, its immediate precursor, was essentially the political expression of a part of the new social forces released by the economic changes Chile experienced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The conditions which the migrant workers met in the new productive zones, and most particularly on the nitrate pampa, gave them a sharp sense of class identity and class solidarity and served to precipitate a conscious rejection of the social, economic and political structures then existing in Chile. In the absence of alternative organisations of all types the POS was able to step in and focus that rejection on the idea of a revolutionary re-organisation of society and the moral regeneration of its most neglected and repressed members. Indeed, the POS, and the PCCh after it, gave its members not only goals to aim for but also rules to live by - and in that they were something more than the political parties which had vied for place and profit before them.

By inheritance, then, the PCCh began its life with considerable assets; a vigorous party press and an organisation which, for all its weaknesses, was capable of maintaining a fair degree of unity and cohesion amongst a membership prone to sharp personality and tactical conflicts. More important still, it had a strong regional power base, close links with organised labour and an exceptional leader of national prominence. These assets made the PCCh a political force of some significance on its foundation and gave it a degree of acceptance from other political groups not usually extended to new parties which openly proclaimed their revolutionary aims. Thus, Radicals, Democrats and even some Conservatives were prepared to make local electoral pacts with the PCCh in the early 1920s while a little later, sections of the military movement and its civilian opponents sought the party's favour. However, this guarded acceptance by other political groups was destroyed partly by the determination of Ibáñez to smash the PCCh as a political and trade union force and partly by third period policies which locked the party into a vicious circle of isolation and defeat. Only with the advent of the Popular Front strategy in 1935 did the PCCh manage to break out of that circle and begin to recover some of its lost influence. Indeed, with the election of Aguirre Cerda to the Presidency of the Republic, the PCCh began a brief era of unprecedented prosperity and although the party suffered from something of a decline during the war years, it more than made good its losses in the immediate post war period. On the

eve of the party's descent into clandestinity in 1947, it had attained a position of power which it did not surpass until 1970.

Clearly, the PCCh's evolution has been determined both by Chilean conditions and circumstances and by its loyalty to the Moscow-based International Communist Movement. Indeed, the PCCh's willingness to follow the policies and directions of the Comintern and its successors has been one of the party's most pronounced characteristics since its foundation. Why should this have been the case and what effects did it have on the party's development and fortunes?

In the early years, when the Comintern took little interest in its Latin American affiliates, the PCCh's loyalty stemmed primarily from a profound sense of alienation from existing Chilean structures and a no less profound admiration for what were seen as the achievements of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union. While such sentiments continued to play an important role in the PCCh's loyalties, other elements soon emerged to strengthen the bonds of allegiance. From the later 1920s, the Comintern began to take a closer interest in the PCCh's affairs; the party began to receive greater technical aid and assistance and began to send members to Moscow and to the seats of the Buró Sud-Americano for training and for consultations and discussions on the best way to implement Comintern policy in Chile. From the early 1930s, the PCCh was probably also in receipt of some financial

support from the Comintern, though never in the quantities necessary to make this a principal factor in its loyalty to Moscow.

Although closer contacts between the PCCh and the Comintern, together with third period policies, helped to produce schism inside the party in the early 1930s, their overall effect was to bind the PCCh closer to Moscow. With the expulsion of Hidalgo and his followers, a leadership emerged in the PCCh which owed its position, in no small measure, to Comintern intervention and which, for that reason, was doubly loyal to Moscow. Indeed, during the difficulties and factional strife of the early 1930s, the principle became firmly established that loyalty to the Comintern was the prime pre-requisite for all those who wanted to lead - or belong to - the PCCh.

While the emergence of a leadership which owed a particular debt of gratitude to the Comintern undoubtedly strengthened ties with Moscow, other factors played a more important role. In particular, the PCCh remained loyal because its association with the International Communist Movement brought it some very real benefits. Mention has already been made of the technical and other aid which the party received from the later 1920s, but even before then it had profited in other ways. In the early 1920s, membership of the Comintern gave the party a revolutionary glamour and authority to which its own actions gave it little claim and,

since the Comintern endorsed the use of political means to further the revolutionary struggle, a powerful weapon in its battle to convince many Chilean workers that participation in the 'bourgeois' political process was not the betrayal of the revolutionary cause that the anarchists claimed.

More generally, the PCCh gained a comprehensive ideology, a clear revolutionary strategy and perhaps most important of all, a sense of perspective in the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, if the PCCh's association with the International Communist Movement sometimes exposed the party to severe penalties, it also equipped the party to overcome the sternest set-backs. Not the least of that equipment was a relatively cohesive and disciplined party organisation. After the early 1930s, when the Comintern's authority had become generally accepted inside the party and when bolshevik organisational norms and practices had begun to take hold, the PCCh was rarely troubled by serious factional strife. Thus, after 1935, the PCCh was able to pursue policies of co-operation with centrist and even right-wing groups - and support conservative regimes like that of President Ríos - without experiencing the sort of internal difficulties which all but destroyed the PS in the 1940s.

However, the party's cohesion after 1935 was also the product of other factors. After 1935, for example, the policies of the International Communist Movement placed little strain on the PCCh's loyalties. In fact, one of the more

important factors in the PCCh's loyalty to Moscow has been that, on the whole, the policies of the Comintern and its successors have worked to the party's advantage. Certainly, except for the early 1930s when third period policies forced the PCCh into costly and bitter confrontations with its most likely allies and with government at the same time, the party was not expected to pursue policies which were so obviously contrary to its immediate interests for any length of time.

That the Comintern's policies generally worked to the party's advantage was, in part, the product of the PCCh's increasing skill in applying them to Chilean conditions. Certainly after 1935 the PCCh managed to remain loyal to Moscow's line and, at the same time, to link its domestic policies to changing domestic circumstances. Thus, while the PCCh's drift towards tougher policies in 1940 and 1945 was influenced by international events and developments, it was also justified - and justifiable - in terms of changing domestic conditions. Similarly, although the Second World War led the PCCh to give President Ríos a greater degree of consistent support than either the PR or the PS, it was careful to make that support conditional, and to respond to popular pressures when necessary. Indeed, while the PCCh clearly has been responsive to Moscow's policies and directions, it was not quite the abject slave that some of its enemies have tried to make out. The PCCh was given, and sometimes took, time to adjust to Comintern policy changes and, despite allegations to the contrary, was rarely expected to change

course without explanations which were not full and persuasive or without playing some part in the elaboration of the details of Comintern policy for Chile. Moreover, while international events sometimes caused the PCCh to reverse its attitudes towards foreign affairs abruptly and dramatically, the changes in domestic policy which those events stimulated were generally introduced gradually, and tied to changes in domestic circumstances.

If the PCCh's international links and loyalties brought the party considerable rewards, they also exposed it to some severe penalties. The PCCh lost manoeuvrability with, at times, dire consequences and it laid itself open to the charge that it was the agent of a foreign power, a charge which made it easy for governments to persecute the party and which automatically limited its appeal for many Chileans. The PCCh's loyalty to Moscow was also a major and continuing source of friction inside the Chilean working class movement and helped to create the conditions in which the PCCh's most serious rival - the PS - emerged.

However, it would be an exaggeration to attribute all the failures and misfortunes which the PCCh experienced between 1922 and 1947 to its international links. General Ibáñez, for example, dealt harshly with all his opponents regardless of their position on the political spectrum while, during the early 1930s, all the left-wing parties were subjected to a degree of harassment and persecution by the authorities. Thus, while the PCCh's loyalty to Moscow made

it an obvious, and easy, target for governmental hostility, its revolutionary aspirations would have earned it a rough passage through the late 1920s and early 1930s in any event. Moreover, while the PCCh's international links probably did help to prevent the emergence of a single mass revolutionary party in the early 1930s, there is little reason to suppose that such a party would have retained its cohesion for any length of time, given the tendency of Chilean parties to fragment over differences between personalities and over tactics.

Having said this, however, it is clear that the PCCh's international ties exacerbated the difficulties it had to face. Because of those ties, the party delayed in reaching a workable accommodation with the Chilean political system and thus deprived itself of the full fruits of participation in coalition politics for some years. And, if its links with Moscow were a marginal factor in the persecution which it experienced in the later 1920s and early 1930s, they were the prime cause of its descent into clandestinity in 1947. Nevertheless, from the PCCh's viewpoint, at any rate, the rewards which it derived from its association with the International Communist Movement far outweighed the penalties.

If the PCCh's loyalty to Moscow has been one of its most pronounced features, so, too, has been its close links with organised labour. The historic role which Recabarren and the POS played in the emergence of the modern trade union movement in Chile, and the PCCh's close identification with

that movement through the FOCh, proved of very great value to the party, and helped it to survive the difficulties of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Despite the PCCh's close links with organised labour, its ability to control the trade union movement has never been as absolute as some of its detractors have suggested. Certainly, for many of the years under consideration here, Communist labour leaders apparently conducted their affairs without much reference to the party and occasionally showed themselves reluctant to follow the party's directions. Similarly, the PCCh's ability to influence industrial unrest was also far from absolute. During the early 1930s, workers resisted the PCCh's constant exhortations to launch strike actions while after 1938, they sometimes proved reluctant to comply with PCCh calls to contain industrial unrest. In fact, at any one time, the PCCh's ability to influence the course of industrial unrest has depended upon a number of variables: the attitude and complexion of the government in power, the political allegiance of the trade union concerned, the history of labour relations in the particular plant and industry involved, the state of the employment market, inflation and the rising cost of living.

Despite all these variables, the PCCh managed to expand and consolidate its influence in the trade union movement during the later 1930s and 1940s, even though, after 1938, it was more often seeking to contain rather than encourage industrial unrest. That it did manage to achieve some

success in containing industrial unrest without losing its hold over the trade union movement was the product of many factors. The PCCh took increasing care in the selection and training of its trade union cadres, it encouraged its supporters to use the legal machinery available for the settlement of labour disputes and, during the war years, it adopted a selective attitude towards worker discontent, concentrating its efforts on maintaining industrial peace in the important extractive industries. In short, although concerned with containing industrial unrest, the PCCh never foreswore the struggle for better wages and conditions and was careful to respond to rises in the tide of industrial unrest when these occurred.

The eleven years of clandestinity and semi-clandestinity which the PCCh experienced after 1947 did nothing to undermine the party's loyalty to Moscow and had no lasting effect on its links with organised labour. Nor did clandestinity produce any profound alterations to the strategy which the PCCh had pursued (with some variations) since 1935. The PCCh still sought to group popular and progressive forces around a platform of broad appeal, still sought to mobilise the masses around their grievances and still sought - in so far as it was able - to use electoral means to combat González Videla.(166) Although a small group of CC members, led by Luis Reinoso, campaigned against these tactics between 1949 and 1951, advocating the adoption of a full-blooded revolutionary programme and direct, violent action, their challenge

(166) Galo González op. cit., pp75-76; Luis Corvalán op. cit., pp217-218.

to the majority on the CC was defeated and they were expelled from the party.(167) Thus, clandestinity tested but did not seriously undermine the authority of the CC and the cohesion of the party.

By the time President González Videla left office, the PCCh was already beginning to play a more or less open role in politics, despite its illegal status, and seeking to re-create an alliance along the lines of the old Popular Front. In 1951, the PCCh joined with the Partido Radical Doctrinario and the Partido Socialista de Chile to form the Frente del Pueblo which supported Salvador Allende in the 1952 presidential elections. Allende lost that election and General Ibáñez became President of Chile for the second time.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

In more senses than one, Ibáñez's second term of office proved to be a turning point in Chilean politics. His election marked the end of the Radical ascendancy over Chilean politics; during his regime the left-wing parties re-grouped and grew in strength, while a new force of the centre emerged, the Partido Demócrata Cristiano. Pursuing its policy of rapprochement with the Socialists, the PCCh agreed to settle its differences with them in the trade union movement and in 1953 helped to create a new confederation, the Central Unica de Trabajadores(CUT).(169) However, it was not until 1956, after the Soviet Communist Party had denounced Stalinism and endorsed the 'peaceful road' to power, that the PCCh was

(167) Galo González op. cit., pp69-73; Elías Lafertte Vida de un Comunista pp347-349.

(168) Urzua Valenzuela Los Partidos Políticos Chilenos p93.

(169) Jorge Barría Serón, El movimiento obrero en Chile p108.

finally persuaded to abandon its attempts to re-create a multi-class alliance like the old Popular Front. In that year, the PCCh accepted the Socialist thesis that the revolutionary struggle was the exclusive responsibility of the proletariat and it formed part of a new coalition, based solely on left-wing parties - the Frente de Acción Popular (FRAP).(170) Aided by the considerable social unrest which affected the final years of the Ibáñez regime, the FRAP parties grew in strength and in 1958, the first year in which the PCCh was legally permitted to take part in elections once more, the FRAP presidential candidate, Salvador Allende, came a very close second to the victor in that contest, Jorge Alessandri.(171)

In 1961, the PCCh took part in its first congressional elections since 1945 and its percentage share of the votes cast almost equalled the record showing it had made in 1941.(172) Although the PCCh's relations with the PS were occasionally subjected to sharp pressures, they have remained basically firm since 1961 and the PCCh itself continued to grow in strength. In 1970, it formed part of the Popular Unity coalition which finally placed Salvador Allende in the Presidency of the Republic. The PCCh's fortunes since 1970 are well known - it formed part of Allende's government until his overthrow in September 1973 and has subsequently experienced a persecution more bloody and persistent than those it suffered

(170) Alejandro Chelén Rojas op. cit., pp142-145.

(171) Urzua Valenzuela op. cit. p97. Allende polled 356,499 votes to Alessandri's 389,948 in a five-cornered fight.

(172) According to Guillisasti Tagle in Partidos Políticos Chilenos p319, the PCCh polled 11.76% of the votes cast in 1961 (electing 16 deputies to Congress) as compared with 10.25% in 1945 and 11.8% in 1941.

under either Ibañez in the late 1920s or González Videla in the late 1940s. Whether the current repression will prove any more effective than previous ones remains to be seen. But on past showing, the PCCh will re-emerge from clandestinity when conditions permit and will continue to play an important role in Chile's life and politics.

A P P E N D I C E S

Appendix A

Basic organisational features and principles of the PCCh

After 1926, the PCCh's basic organisational unit was the cell which, unlike the section, was intended to group together all party members at their place of work rather than at their place of residence. However, the prevalence of underemployment and unemployment and the small size of most commercial, industrial and manufacturing establishments often meant that there were no other party members at the place of work. Members in this predicament were allowed to form street cells where they lived and, indeed, the street cell long remained the most common form. The cell was expected to meet regularly, to appoint a secretariat to organise its affairs. Its chief tasks were to organise party activity at the grass-roots level, to recruit new members and to act as a two-way channel of communication between the membership and the higher echelons of the party. Membership of a cell was compulsory and it was through the cell that members, in theory at least, had the opportunity to participate in the formation of party policy.(1)

The fraction was the means by which party members co-ordinated their activities in all organisations which had a mass character - trade unions, professional associations and even sports clubs. Communist Congressmen were also grouped together in a fraction. The fraction had most of the duties and functions of the cell and, indeed, in the trade union movement there was considerable confusion between the

(1) Bandera Roja 17.10.1931; 22.11.1931; 28.11.1931.

two forms of organisation. However, the fraction had a special responsibility to popularise the party line and to seek new recruits.(2)

Cells sent delegates to Comites Locales(CLs) which co-ordinated party work at the district level; these in their turn sent delegates to Comites Regionales(CRs) which performed similar functions at the provincial level. Delegates from the lower echelons of the party were sent to periodic National Party Congresses, in theory the maximum authority in the party, which decided party policy and which elected a national executive Committee, the Comité Central(CC).

On paper, then, the PCCh's organisational structure was fully democratic. However, the concept of democratic centralism gave the CC the real power. According to this concept, while all party members had the right and, indeed, the duty to discuss all party matters fully and freely, the decision of the majority was binding on that of the minority and, more important still, decisions made by the higher echelons of the party were binding on the lower. Thus, in effect, decisions made by the CC were automatically mandatory for all party members. Democratic centralism together with the development of organisational practices by which out-going officials nominated their successors, who were then elected by acclamation rather than ballot, meant that the higher echelons were generally able to control their own composition and, indeed, were able to impose their own choice of officers on the lower echelons.(3)

(2) Ibid. 17.10.1931.

(3) Luis Cruz Salas 'Los Partidos Populares 1931-1945' (Memoria, Universidad Técnica del Estado, 1969) p34.

Appendix B

Indices of Production 1938-1948

1929 equals 100

	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Mining</u>
1938	130.7	110.3	87.3
1939	129.0	111.1	85.4
1940	142.9	107.8	90.9
1941	146.2	106.0	107.3
1942	144.5	108.3	107.8
1943	139.4	112.2	105.4
1944	143.2	122.6	104.2
1945	163.0	118.0	103.1
1946	173.0	118.1	90.0
1947	177.4	118.2	102.1
1948	185.0	126.8	109.0

Source: Ricardo Lagos La Industria en Chile: Antecedentes Estructurales (Santiago, 1966) p37.

Appendix C

Strike actions 1938-1941

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jly.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1938	2	4	4	4	4	1	none	of	significance			
1939	2	4	2	3	-	-	3	-	1	-	1	1
1940	1	1	2	1	1	-	2	1	-	1	3	3
1941	6	2	1	-	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	4

<u>Total Strikes</u>	1938	19
	1939	17
	1940	16
	1941	26

Source: Juana Stambuk Los Movimientos Sociales durante el Frente Popular (Memoria, Universidad Técnica del Estado, Santiago, 1970)

Appendix D

Inflation and Wage Increases in the
Mining Industry 1939-1948

	<u>% Annual Inflation</u>	<u>% Annual Wage Increases</u>		
		<u>Coal</u>	<u>Copper</u>	<u>Nitrates</u>
1939	3.0	19.5	8.9	14.8
1940	12.6	15.8	7.0	1.9
1941	15.2	16.1	18.4	4.3
1942	25.6	23.1	15.9	15.1
1943	29.4	18.4	24.7	11.3
1944	11.8	14.2	13.6	17.2
1945	8.8	2.0	14.2	2.0
1946	15.9	18.0	13.7	17.5
1947	33.5	5.6	19.6	19.7
1948	18.0	20.0	19.1	26.2

Sources: Aníbal Pinto Chile, un caso de desarrollo frustrado
(Santiago, 1973) p205.

Estadística Chilena, December 1949, p638.

Appendix E

Biographical Notes on leading Central
Committee Members

So far as can be ascertained from the available evidence, fourteen members survived three successive elections to the CC (in 1939, 1941 and 1945) and it seems reasonable to assume that those fourteen constituted the ruling group on the CC during those years, although some of them probably survived because of their relationship with either Galo González or Contreras Labarca rather than because of their own intrinsic merits. Brief biographies of the fourteen are listed below, in alphabetical order.

Abarca Cabrera, Humberto Born 1911, Antofagasta Province, the son of a metallurgical worker. Began work as a messenger boy in Chuquicamata, later became a metal worker himself. Active in the trade union movement from the late 1920s, created an FJC branch on the nitrate pampa in 1931. Active in the FJC in Viña del Mar and elected to the CC of the PCCh in 1932. Went North to Andacollo in 1933 to take up employment as a metal worker. While there, re-activated the CR Coquimbo and became its secretary. Rejoined the CC in 1938, became a member of the CC's Political Commission and later head of the Organisation Commission. Secretary CR Ovalle 1938-1941. Deputy 1941-1945.(1)

Barraza, Pascual Printer by trade. Secretary, CR La Serena in 1939, elected to the CC in 1939. Secretary, CR Santiago 1945-1947.(2)

(1) El Siglo 11.2.1945.

(2) El Popular 3.1.1940. El Siglo 19.11.1945; 21.1.1947.

Chacón Corona, Juan Born 1896, in Lampa, bastard son of a domestic servant and a local landowner. Worked in glass and nitrate industries and as a hatter. Became active politically first as an anarchist, then as a member of the POS and the FOCh. Appointed member of the CR Santiago in 1927 and a member of the CC of the PCCh from 1931. Head of the CC's Peasant Commission from 1936, member of the Political Commission from the late 1930s to 1945. Deputy 1941-1945. Vice-President of Instituto de Economía Agrícola 1946-1947.(3)

Contreras Labarca, Carlos Born 1899, middle class parents. Student leader and qualified lawyer. Joined the PCCh in 1924, elected to the CC in 1926. Secretary General of the PCCh from 1931 to 1946. Deputy 1926-1930; 1937-1941: Senator 1941-1949. Consejero to the Junta de Exportación Agrícola 1938-1941. Minister of Ways and Public Works 1946-1947.(4)

Díaz Iturrieta, José Born 1905, son of peasants. Nitrate worker, joined the FOCh in 1921, later worked in the copper mines of Chuquicamata. Active in trade union movement throughout the 1920s and 1930s but not known when he joined the PCCh. Elected to the CC in 1939, and a member of the Political Commission from 1943. Secretary of the Federación Minera from 1940. Deputy 1941-1945.(5)

Escobar Díaz, Andrés Born 1902 in Talca, son of an agricultural worker. Worked on the land himself, then became a mechanic, a tram-driver and a rail worker. Joined the FOCh and the POS in 1920, Secretary CR Talca 1922-1926; CR Curicó

(3) See, José Miguel Varas's Chacón for details of Chacon's life and career.

(4) Frente Popular 25.11.1939.

(5) El Siglo 1.2.1945.

1926-1929. Member CC from 1932, probably member of the Political Commission from the same year. Deputy from 1932. Secretary CR Santiago 1941-1945.(6)

Escobar Zamora, Alfredo Born 1911 in Río Colorado, his father was a miner and the family was active in the FOCh. Miner and cement worker. Active trade unionist from the early 1930s. Joined the PCCh in 1937, elected to the CC in 1939. Member of the Control Commission from 1941.(7)

Fonseca, Ricardo Born 1906 in Puerto Saavedra, son of peasants. Trained as a teacher and was active in teachers' unions from 1924. Joined the PCCh in 1929, elected to the CR Santiago in 1933. Secretary General of the FJC from 1937 to 1940. Probably member of the CC and the Political Commission from 1937. Appointed editor of El Siglo in 1940. Deputy from 1941. Secretary General of the PCCh 1946-1949.(8)

González Galo Born 1894 in Valparaíso Province, the son of peasants. Worked in the copper mines (1918-1920), later as a docker and haulier in Valparaíso. Joined the FOCh in 1924, delegate to the FOCh National Convention in 1925. Joined the Socorro Rojo Internacional (PCCh prisoners' aid association) in 1926 and the PCCh itself a little later. CC member from 1930, head of the Control Commission from the mid-1930s. Secretary General of the PCCh, 1949-1958.(9)

Lafertte, Elías Born in 1886 in Coquimbo Province, mother a schoolteacher. Typesetter by trade. Founder member POS,

(6) El Siglo 9.2.1945.

(7) Ibid. 18.2.1941; 5.2.1945.

(8) See, Luis Corvalán's Ricardo Fonseca - Combatiente Ejemplar for details of Fonseca's life and career.

(9) See, Luis Enrique Delano Galo González y la construcción del Partido (Santiago, 1968) for a fuller biographical account of his life and career.

expelled c.1919. Joined the FOCh and worked on the Federación Obrera during the early 1920s. Elected onto the JEF FOCh in 1923 and joined the PCCh a little later. Co-opted onto the CC's Trade Union Commission in 1926. Spent most of the Ibáñez years in jail or in banishment. Perennial PCCh presidential candidate from 1927. CC member from 1931. Senator 1937-1953. Although given the unique office of President of the PCCh in the 1930s, Lafertte is generally considered to have been the party's 'bandera' - the living embodiment of the days of Recabarren and the party's historic past - rather than a real force in the leadership.(10)

Ocampo, Salvador Born 1903, in Tarapacá, the son of a rail-worker. Linotypist, worked on many newspapers, Communist and non-Communist. Member POS and the FOCh. Founder member FJC in 1923, elected to the CC of the PCCh in 1926. Appointed Secretary General of the FOCh in 1931 and later became the sub-Secretary General of the CTCh (1936-1945) and the head of the CC's Trade Union Commission. Deputy 1941-1945.(11)

Santos Medel, Leoncio Coal miner and union organiser in the southern coalfields. Not known when he entered the PCCh. Member of the CC from 1939. Deputy 1941-1945.(12)

Vargas Puebla, Juan Born 1908 in La Serena, father a shoemaker. Worked as a tin-plater, later became a construction worker and plasterer. Joined anarchist-dominated Plasterers' Union in 1925. Joined the PCCh in 1932 and was a member of the CC of the FJC in the same year. Expelled for Trotskyism

(10) See, Elías Lafertte Vida de un Comunista.

(11) See, an anonymous pamphlet Una Vida al servicio del Pueblo (Santiago, 1965) for details of Ocampo's career.

(12) El Popular 3.1.1940.

in 1934, re-admitted in 1935. Member of the CC and its Trade Union Commission from 1939, member of the Political Commission from 1941. Regidor 1938-1941. Deputy 1941-1945.(13)

Zamora, Justo Born 1902 in Quillota, son of peasant parents. Worked in the nitrate fields and later as a tram-driver in Valparaíso. Joined the FOCh in 1921, recruited by Galo González into the PCCh in 1930. Secretary CR Aconcagua 1936-1939; Concepción 1939-1940. Member of the CC from 1936, member of the Political Commission 1941-1945.(14)

(13) El Siglo 4.2.1945; El Imparcial 29.7.1937.
(14) El Siglo 19.2.1941; El Imparcial 8.2.1945.

Appendix FVotes cast for the PCCh in general
elections for the Chamber of Deputies
in 1937, 1941 and 1945

<u>Constituency</u>	<u>1937</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1945</u>
1. Arica	2,094 *	3,702 **	2,399 *
2. Tocopilla, Antofagasta	3,528 **	7,514 ***	5,226 ***
3. Chañaral, Copiapó	253	-	-
4. La Serena, Coquimbo	-	4,136 *	3,753 **
5. Petorca, San Felipe	-	1,825	1,053
6. Valparaíso, Quillota	4,275 *	5,466 **	4,777 **
7. Santiago 1st.	3,737 **	6,591 *	7,090 **
2nd.	-	1,989 *	2,251 *
3rd	-	2,340 *	2,615
8. Melipilla, San Antonio	-	1,421	1,317 *
9. Rancagua	1,038	2,690 *	1,794 *
10. San Fernando, Santa Cruz	-	429	-
11. Curicó	-	1,218	723
12. Talca, Curepto	-	1,797 *	903
13. Constitución	-	-	-
14. Linares	-	-	492
15. Itata	-	-	-
16. Chillán	-	784	430
17. Concepción	1,944	5,773 **	6,951 **
18. Arauco	-	1,880 *	1,683
19. Laja	-	-	-
20. Traiguén	-	671	10
21. Temuco	-	1,078	1,271
22. Valdivia	293	1,365	1,395
23. Osorno	-	286	-
24. Llanquihue	-	189	-
25. Ancud, Castro	-	-	-
26. Magallanes	-	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Totals	17,162	53,144	46,133
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

* indicates one deputy
elected

Source: Estadística Chilena December 1937, September 1941
and December 1945.

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(a) Left Wing and Workers' Publications

Acción Directa	IWW	1920-1926
Acción Obrera	POS	1916
Adelante (Talcahuano)	PD	1920-1924
Alerta	PCCh	1928
Avance	Grupo Avance	1931
Bandera Proletaria	PCCh	1933
Bandera Roja	POS	1919
Bandera Roja	PCCh	1925
Bandera Roja	PCCh	1931-1934; 1936
Barricada	FJS	1937
Boletín del Comité Central	PCCh	1933; 1936
Boletín del CC del la Izquierda Comunista	IC	1933
Boletín de Orientación	PCCh	1940
Boletín Interno	PCCh	1937
Boletín Político	PCCh	1932
Boletín Sindical	PCCh	1937
Boletín Sindical Agrario	PCCh	1939
Boletín de la Comisión Nacional de Organización	PCCh	1936
Ceteché (Antofagasta)	CTCh	1943-1948
Choque	PCCh	1933

Claridad	FECh	1920-1931
Claridad	PS	1938
Consigna	PS	1935-1941
CTCh	CTCh	1943-1948
Combate	PST	1943
El Bonete (Iquique)	POS	1912-1913
El Combate (Valdivia)	PCCh	1926
El Comunista (Antofagasta)	PCCh	1922-1926
El Despertar (Iquique)	PCCh	1943-1947
El Despertar de los Trabajadores (Iquique)	POS/ PCCh	1912-1927
El Despertar de los Obreros (Lebu)	FOCh	1922
El Despertar del Pueblo (Iquique)	PCCh	1931-1933
El Despertar del Proletariado (Iquique)	PCCh	1934
El Grito Popular (Iquique)	PD	1911
El Heraldó (Arica)	FOCh	1921-1923
El Obrero Gráfico	Printing workers	1932
El Obrero Panadero	Bakers' Union	1924-1931
El Obrero Tranviario	FOCh	1932-1933
El Popular (Antofagasta)	PCCh	1939-1947
El Productor (Iquique)	IWW	1921-1923
El Proletario (Tocopilla)	PD	1904-1915
El Siglo	PCCh	1940-1948
El Socialista (Valparaíso)	POS	1915-1918
El Socialista (Antofagasta)	POS	1916-1921
El Soviet (Talcahuano)	PCCh/FOCh	1922-1923
Frente Unico	PCCh	1934-1936
Frente Popular (Concepción)	PCCh	1937
Frente Popular	PCCh	1936-1940
Frente Popular (Iquique)	PCCh	1937-1941
Frente Popular (La Serena)	PCCh	1941
Hoz y Martillo	PCCh	1932
Izquierda	IC	1934-1936
Justicia	PCCh/FOCh	1924-1927
		1931-1933
Justicia (Antofagasta)	PCCh/FOCh	1931-1934
Justicia (Iquique)	PCCh/FOCh	1933
Juventud Obrera	FJC	1932
La Batalla (Valdivia)	PCCh	1926
La Chispa	IC	1931
La Chispa Comunista (Talcahuano)	PCCh	1923
La Comuna (Viña del Mar)	POS/FOCh	1919-1921
La Comuna (Puente Alto)	PCCh	1944-1947
La Defensa Obrera (Tocopilla)	PCCh	1927;
		1931-1932
La Defensa Obrera (Puente Alto)	PS	1942-1946
La Democracia	PD	1899-1901
La Federación Obrera	FOCh	1921-1924
La Gran Federación Obrera	GFOCh	1910-1913
La Jornada Comunista (Valdivia)	PCCh	1924-1927
		1931-1932

La Lllamarada (Antofagasta)	FJC	1923-1926
La Locomotora	Railway Workers	1912-1951
La Mujer Nueva	MEMCh	1935-1941
La Protesta	IWW	1931-1938
La Tribuna	PD	1911-1921
La Voz Obrera y Campesina	PCCh	1933
La Voz Socialista	POS	1913
Mundo Nuevo	FJC	1938-1947
Nuestra Voz	Printing Workers	1932
Orientación	PCCh	1937
Principios	PCCh	1933-1934
		1939-1947
Qué Hubo	PCCh	1939-1940
Rebelión	PCCh	1926
Rumbo	FJS	1936
Trabajadores de la	Teachers'	1932-1934
Enseñanza	Union	
Unidad Obrera	PCCh	1934
Vanguardia	Revolutionary	1933
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(b) Other Party Presses

La Hora	PR	1935-1947
Trabajo	MNS	1937-1940

(c) The Established Press*

El Diario Ilustrado	1922-1948
El Mercurio	1922-1948
La Opinión	1932-1948
La Nación	1922-1948

*All these newspapers were consulted as and when required for the years under consideration in this study. Their editorial viewpoints differed considerably. El Diario Ilustrado was right-wing Catholic Conservative and El Mercurio was liberal conservative. La Opinión was pro-Ibañista and anti-alessandrista in the 1930s but became increasingly identified with the PS in the 1940s. La Nación became the official government newspaper during the first Presidency of Ibañez (1927-1931) and thereafter reflected the views of the government of the day.

(d) The Comintern and Cominform Press

El Trabajador Latino Americano (Montevideo)	1931-1932
International Press Correspondence (Vienna and London)	1922-1939

La Correspondencia Sud Americana (Buenos Aires)	1926
Revista Comunista (Montevideo)	1932
The Communist International (London)	1929-1935
World News and Views (London)	1939-1947
For a Lasting Peace, For a Peoples' Democracy (Bucharest)	1947-1948

(e) Others

Boletín del Trabajo	1911-1926
Estadística Chilena	1935-1950
Ercilla	1943-1947
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MAP OF CHILE SHOWING PROVINCES
AND TOWNS MENTIONED IN THIS WORK

